A FORGOTTEN GOSPEL

Hugh Davis Murphy

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A Forgotten Gospel

A Forgotten Gospel:

Lectures on Doctrine

Delivered in

S. George's Parish Church, Belfast.

By

Hugh Davis Murphy, D.D.

Rector.

Die wenigen, die was davon erkannt,
Die thöricht g'nug ihr volles Herz nicht wahrten,
Dem Pöbel ihr Gefühl, ihr Schauen offenbarten,
Hat man von je gekreuzigt und verbrannt.

—FAUST.

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Preface.

I THINK it right, notwithstanding Goethe's warning in the lines which stand on the title page, to publish these Lectures on Doctrine. While I do not expect to fare better than my predecessors, I would remind those who may differ from me that they are constantly defending their own doctrines and methods; and I would express the hope that the liberty which they are in the habit of claiming for themselves they will accord for once to another. No just-minded person will blame a writer for stating or defending what he believes to be the truth. The late Rev. Professor Witherow, of Londonderry, said, "The Church that forgets to assert and teach her peculiar principles lives in such a world as this only by sufferance; her own children are cold to her; and, when she sinks to dust, she shall have few to lament her fall. But the Church that thunders its opinions in the ears of mankind, and which neither force nor flattery can silence, is a Church that will have many bitter enemies, but many warm friends—it will have many to hate, but it will have some to love, and some to die for it." I like these brave words. If we all acted in the spirit

of them, there might be a want of agreement between us, but there would be no want of charity.

These Lectures, with one exception, were delivered extempore, and written out after delivery.

From the attention with which the Lectures, some of them occupying nearly an hour in delivery, were listened to both by my own congregation and by strangers, I conclude that the teaching of definite doctrine has a great attraction for the laity.

List of Subjects.

First Series.

		PAGE
I.	THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH	1
II.	CHURCH GOVERNMENT	21
III.	PRAYERS IN THE CONGREGATION: EXTEMPORE OR PRECOMPOSED	53
IV.	THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM	81
V.	CONFIRMATION	107
VI.	THE HOLY COMMUNION	119

Second Series.

I.	FASTING	137
II.	ALMSGIVING	163
III.	CONVERSION	201
IV.	THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT	237
V.	THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS	263
VI.	THE SIN OF SCHISM	281

Table of Matter in this Volume.

First Series.

I.—THE HOLY CATHOLIC CHURCH.

Importance of subject.—Why the Church is called "Holy."—Why the Church is called "Catholic."—The Christian Church a Society.—A Society necessary for the conservation and propagation of any truth.—To what extent we are indebted to the Church.—The Church visible.—The Church possesses the same powers as other Societies.—Christ alone has power to found a Church.—Honour paid to the Ministerial Office.—Continuity belongs to every Society which has a history.—Continuity is essential to the Church.—In what position is the Church of Ireland in regard to Continuity?—The Church of Rome has not a single clergyman in Ireland with Irish Orders.—To preach about the Church is to preach the Gospel.—The Church dear to Christ.

II.—CHURCH GOVERNMENT.

Our proper title, "The Church of Ireland."—That terrible word, "Prelacy."—The Church of Ireland democratic.—Superior discipline in Dissent.—Who have power of Ordination?—Preface to the Ordinal defines valid Ordination.—Argument from history in favour of Episcopacy.—Episcopacy could not have been introduced suddenly, without any notice in history.—Nor grow up gradually in half a century.—Presbyterianism introduced into England.—Testimony of Continental Reformers in favour of Episcopacy, Grotius, Melancthon, Calvin, Beza.—Testimony of early Christian writers for Episcopacy, Origen, Tertullian, Irenæus, Ignatius, Hegesippus, Eusebius.—Evidence for Epis-

copacy as clear as evidence for genuineness of books of New Testament.—S. Jerome.—Bishop Lightfoot.—Argument from Bible in favour of Episcopacy.—Orders in Old Testament; during our Lord's life on earth; during lifetime of Apostles.—Office, not title important.—Church at Ephesus, Church at Crete, Church at Jerusalem.

III.—PRAYERS IN THE CONGREGATION: EXTEMPORE OR PRECOMPOSED.

Persecution of Churchmen by Dissenters.—New England lambs.—No instance in Bible of Extempore Service.—Extempore Public Prayer brought to England by Jesuits.—Objections to a Liturgy.—Testimony of Reformers in behalf of Prayer Book.—Advantages of a Liturgy.—Argument from history.—Testimony of John Calvin.—Argument from Holy Scripture.—Example of our Lord and His Apostles.—The Worship of the Blessed.—The Temple Service.—The Lord's Prayer.

IV.—THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM.

Ignorance on subject inexcusable.—Explaining away Baptism.—"Westminster Confession of Faith."—Blessings conferred in Baptism.—Essential of salvation.—Made disciples of Christ.—Regeneration.—Mistakes in regard to Regeneration.—History of word "Regeneration."—Forgiveness of sins.—The gift of the Holy Ghost.—Objections.—The free grace of God.

V.—CONFIRMATION.

Reasons for Confirmation.—The Church has power to decree rites or ceremonies.—"Westminster Confession."—The Jewish Church decreed ceremonies.—The Christian Church has always practised Confirmation. Testimony of early Christian writers, Tertullian, S. Cyprian, S. Jerome, S. Augustine, S. Ambrose.—Testimony of Luther.—Testimony of Calvin.—Reasons from Holy Scripture.—One question remains.—"Some of the confirmed show no signs of having received grace?"

VI.—HOLY COMMUNION.

The Holy Communion in favour of the New Testament.—Names by which called.—Characteristics in early Liturgies.—Two Sacraments only.—Council of Trent.—Transubstantiation.—Consubstantiation.—The real Spiritual Presence.—Two schools of theology.—The sacrificial aspect of the Lord's Supper.—Dean Hook.—Sacrifice does not involve shedding of blood.—Twofold aspect of Holy Communion.—Is there a sacrificing ministry?—The priesthood of the laity.—Ideas of sacrifice in Holy Communion.—The highest act of worship.

Second Series.

I.—FASTING.

Prejudice.—The preacher's duty.—Casting pearls before swine.—Practice of fasting universal.—Fasting practised in every Dispensation.—Garden of Eden.—Fasts among the Jews, stated Fasts, national Fasts, private Fasts.—A Presbyterian witness.—Fasting practised in Old Testament: is it abrogated in New?—Example of Christ in fasting, Lent.—Teaching of Christ on Fasting.—How does the case for Fasting stand?—Did the Apostles fast according to what Christ foretold?—Explaining away Fasting.—Is Fasting Popish?—Teaching of "Evangelicals" on Fasting, and their custom.—"Directory for Public Worship."—Ulster Presbyterian custom.—A. K. H. B.—When should we fast?—How should we fast?—Sir Andrew Clarke.—Uses of Fasting.—Fasting a means, not an end.—George Herbert.—Accompaniments of Fasting.—Blessings gained through Fasting.

II.—ALMSGIVING.

Subject of Almsgiving neglected in preaching.—How far we have erred from truth of the Bible.—Bible and Prayer Book command us to preach about almsgiving.—A guilty conscience.—Objections to subject.—Reward of almsgiving.—Sowing and Reaping.—Not afraid of doctrine.

—Rewards promised in Holy Scripture, a material reward, a spiritual reward, a reward in the life to come.—Why certain persons do not receive a reward.—Give me neither poverty nor riches.—Robbing God brings a curse.—Sin of Dives.—The worth of a sealskin jacket.—Mistakes rectified.—A canny Scot.—Indirect rewards in giving.—Almsgiving an essential part of worship.—Irreverence in making offerings to God.—How much should we give?—Proportion given by Jews.—Antiquity of tithes.—Ignorance on question.—"I have given my mite."—How much do we owe to Christ?—Excuses for not giving liberally.—Objects of charity.—"We are really poor."—Spirit in which we should give, proportionately, with self-denial, systematically, for Christ's sake, cheerfully, while we have time, in secret.—Not to be seen of men.

III.—CONVERSION.

Mistaken ideas in regard to Conversion.—Conjuring use of word.—Conversion means in some mouths the whole Gospel.—Word never used in Bible in passive sense.—To the law and to the testimony.—Conversion used in Bible in a bad sense, turning from holiness to sin.—Sermon on Mount defective if popular ideas of conversion be correct.—The word conversion found only once in whole Bible.—And only once in Book of Common Prayer.—Immoral doctrine.—Profession of conversion and not its fruits everything according to some people.—Indefectibility of grace.—S. John mistaken.—What saith the Scripture?—Is conversion always sudden?—Three spiritual experiences.—Biblical examples.—The case of Saul of Tarsus.—Christ teaches us by the processes in Nature.—The still small voice.—Is conversion in the popular sense necessary for every one?—S. John iii. 5.—Evil results of popular view—The question for every one.—Summary of the truth.—In what senses according to Holy Scripture we are to convert.—Personal application of doctrine.—Do not judge others, but yourself.

IV.—THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT.

Subjective religion.—Dangers of ignoring subject.—What the popular theories are.—Special illumination.—Feeling.—Abuse of word "saved."—Biblical meanings of word.—William Cowper.—German views.—

Semler.—Theory of feeling tried by Scripture, tried by practice.—Neuralgia.—Confidence.—"Children of God."—Possibility of knowing that we are the obedient children of God.—How know this?—"Know," not "feel," the doctrine of Holy Scripture.—Feeling and conduct.—How far we dare go.—Bishop Bull.

V.—THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

Meaning of word "Saints."—Encouraging reflection.—Nature of Communion of Saints.—Communion of Saints not broken by death.—How the Communion of Saints may be cultivated.—Private prayer.—Public worship, especially the Holy Communion.—Meditation when alone.—Companionship.—Commemoration.—Use of doctrine.

VI.—SIN OF SCHISM.

Not a pleasant subject.—Cain.—Charity to point out sin.—Change of tone in secular press.—Unionism.—What Schism is.—Affected by opinions of those around us.—The word Schism in Holy Scripture.—Anglican Church on Schism.—Teaching of early Church on Schism.—John Calvin on Schism.—Richard Baxter on Schism.—Manufacture of ministers.—Setting up a Church.—Is the Church of Ireland schismatical?—The Church was intended by Christ to be one and undivided.—Awfulness of Schism as shown by God's Word.—Apologies for sin of Schism.—Degrees of guilt.—Is Schism justifiable?—Frivolous excuses for Schism.—Disloyal Churchmen.—How to promote union.—Signs of union.

APPENDIX TO LECTURE ON FASTING.

Opinion of "Evangelicals," "Broad Churchmen," and Biblical Scholars.

First Series.

The Holy Catholic Church.

I.

The Holy Catholic Church.

Acts ii. 42.

"And they continued stedfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship."

THE first of this Course of Lectures is on the subject of the Holy Catholic Church. It is a wide subject. Volumes have been written on it; and in a single Lecture I can only point out some characteristics of the Church which is Christ's Body. Many important things concerning it I must pass over. Much which I would wish to say must be left unsaid.

And first of all I would impress on you the great importance of the subject. Every Evangelical Christian will allow that belief in the Holy Trinity is a vital truth of the Gospel; and, according to the consent of Christendom, belief in the Holy Catholic Church follows immediately on belief in the Three Persons of the Godhead. In the Apostles' Creed we express our faith in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost; and next we confess "I believe in the Holy Catholic Church."

And here I may remark that the Church must be different from what many persons suppose, else it would never have occupied the place it does in the Creed, as one of the first principles of Divine truth. If the Church were what many people seem to imagine; if it were composed of a conglomerate of all denominations from Romanism down to Shakerism, would it ever have filled the place it does in the Christian Creed? Would it not be too large a call on a man's belief, ay, on his credulity, to ask him to believe at the same time in all these?

Let me direct your attention to the words in which we express our belief in the Church of Christ. We say first that the Church is Holy. "But," says some one who has not read the Holy Scriptures carefully, "is it not an extraordinary thing to speak of the Church as Holy when we see in her many unfaithful Ministers and many unworthy members?" We confess that it is too true that numbers do not live up to their privileges. It has always been so. Even of those Ministers whom our Lord Himself chose, one turned out badly. "Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?" When we see Clergymen turned traitors in doctrine and conduct, it should not shake our faith in the Church, nor need it astonish, although it will grieve us. There may be many unworthy Clergymen at present;

but they are few in proportion to the number of those among Christ's own Ministers. If one out of every twelve Clergymen were corrupt in life and in faith, would not people be more ready than they are to question if we should call the Church holy? And as there were from the first unworthy Ministers of the Church, so also were there unworthy members. When Christ spoke certain plain words about the Holy Communion, we read that "from that time many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." (S. John vi. 66.) And we do not trace the history of the infant Church far until we come across the case of Ananias and Sapphira. When such cases come before us now they must grieve us, but need not shake our faith, for we have the words of the Church's Founder, "Lo, I have told you of them before." In several of our Blessed Lord's parables, as in that of the Ten Virgins, that of the Tares, that of the Draw Net, He teaches that in His Church bad will be mingled with the good. Forgetting the plain teaching of Holy Scripture on this point, some persons have left the Church which Christ founded, and have endeavoured to establish a Church composed wholly of good people. But even if these people had authority from Christ to found a new Church, and if they had succeeded in enclosing no Tares in the little corner of the field which

they have portioned off, such a Church would be entirely different in constitution and aim from that which Christ founded. For Christ established His Church, not for the "uncoguid," not for those who are perfect, but for the purpose of gathering in all sorts of men, even the outcasts of society, and training them in holiness, and making them at last "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." As long as the will of man is free, however, some will not fulfil the conditions of the Covenant into which they have been brought by Baptism.

In spite of the disloyalty of these subjects of the Kingdom of Heaven, universal Christendom has through the centuries with one consent confessed that the Church is Holy. Is not Jerusalem called in the New Testament "the Holy City," although it contained within it many that were wicked; although it contained those who put to death the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted them?

The Church is called holy because her Founder is holy; because her laws and institutions are holy; because she gives us the Holy Bible, which is able to make us wise unto salvation; and because she is designed for making all those holy who trust in her Founder, use her means of grace, and submit themselves obediently to her laws.

We say that the Church is "Catholic" as well as holy. In Christian literature the word Catholic means —first, Universal; and second, True. The word came to be used in this latter sense very early in Christian writings.

"But," says an objector, "how can we call the Church Catholic in the sense of Universal, when even the majority of the whole population of the globe do not belong to her?" True, we reply, "we see not yet all things put under Him." The Church is Universal, not in the sense of extent, but of character. The Jewish Church was the Church of one nation. The Christian Church is open to all. Isaiah prophesied of her (lx. 11), "Therefore thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their Kings may be brought."

Christ's command to His Apostles was, "Go ye therefore and teach (*margin*, make disciples or Christians) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The Christian Church is Catholic in character. Her gates lie open for the admission of all who will profess her faith, and be obedient to her discipline; and if some of those admitted into her communion, according to Christ's command, turn out like Simon the sorcerer,

all we can do is to remember Christ's words on this point; to see to it that our own faith and lives are pure; and to endeavour, as far as in us lies, to make all who are called by the name of Christ to depart from iniquity; to remind them by our words, and especially by our deeds, that they are members of the Church of Christ, not for the sake of respectability, or of getting on in the world, or getting a lift in society, but in order to follow the example of our Saviour Christ, and to be made like unto Him.

The Christian Church is a Society. Mr. Whitefield, the noted preacher, towards the close of his life mourned over the fact that, although he had been the instrument of turning more people to the knowledge of the truth than John Wesley had been, yet he could point to very few of his converts remaining firm, while Mr. Wesley could number his by hundreds. The greater success of Wesley, in not only making converts but keeping them, Whitefield attributed to the fact that Wesley gathered his converts together in a Society. There is truth in Whitefield's idea. For the conservation and propagation of any idea or series of truths a Society is absolutely essential. Do you think the ideas underlying Orangeism could have survived to the present without the Orange Society? How could the doctrines and mysteries of Freemasonry have been handed down

through the centuries without the Craft of Freemasons? The Christian Church is a Society for the conservation and propagation of the truths of the Gospel. Christ came into the world not only to teach us all His holy will, and to die for us on the Cross, but also to found a Society. Without this Society the benefits of His death could not have been transmitted through various generations.

Without the Society which Christ founded we should never have heard the good news of the Gospel.

Without the Christian Society the truths of Christianity must have perished with the first generation of Christians. The Holy Catholic Church is a Divine Society. It was it which collected out of a number of documents the genuine writings of the New Testament, and handed them down to us, as we have them at present. Christ chose to propagate His truth, to convey the benefits of His death through a Society; and, as far as we can see, this was the only way possible, except a fresh revelation to each succeeding generation had effected the same purpose. There are some people so ignorant of the plan of Salvation, that they cannot with patience hear a preacher speak of the Church; yet, to the Church, under God, we owe the Bible; to the Church we owe all the knowledge we possess of Gospel

truth; and in the Church we receive, through the merits of Christ, pardon, and peace, and every other divine blessing, by those channels of grace which the Founder of the Church appointed.

The Christian Church is a Society, and is therefore visible. Some people talk much of "the invisible Church." I know nothing either from Scripture or History of an invisible Church. The Jewish Church was, I presume, visible; and the Christian Church is no less so. To speak of a visible Church composed of the faithful and the unfaithful; and, within this, an invisible Church composed of the faithful alone, is the veriest nonsense. I believe that "in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." But to say that such persons throughout the world constitute an invisible Church has no warrant from the Old Testament or the New. The Church of Philippi, the Church of Corinth, the Church of Ephesus were all visible organisations. Christ in speaking of how we should treat an offending brother says that we should go and tell him his fault alone. If he refuse to hear us we are to take with us one or more witnesses; and if he shall neglect to hear them we are to tell it unto the Church; but if he neglect to hear the Church "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican." (S. Matthew xviii. 17.)

The Church is here without doubt a visible Society, to which appeal can be made.

The Holy Catholic Church is a Society ; and it is surely not too much to claim for it, the same powers which other societies possess.

Every Society has some founder from whom it traces its descent, to whom it looks up, whose authority it quotes, whose example it follows. Every denomination calling itself Christian has also some founder. The founder of the Society of Friends was George Fox. The founder of Methodism was John Wesley. The founder of Plymouthism was Mr. Darby. The founder of the Salvation Army was William Booth, and the founder of the Christian Society is Christ. He it was Who said, " I build My Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." He and He alone has power to say that. He has delegated authority to certain others to extend that Church which He founded, but to no men nor body of men has He given authority to found another Church.

Every human Society has a power of admission and of expulsion ; has power to admit new members, and to expel the incorrigibly bad. This power the Christian Church has from her Founder, " Go ye, therefore, and teach (*i.e.*, make disciples of) all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

the Holy Ghost." (S. Matthew xxvii. 19.) Here is the mode of admitting members into the Christian Society. "Whose soever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." (S. John xx. 23.) Here is the power of discipline; of expulsion, and of receiving again to favour and privilege.

Every Society founded by men possesses power to make laws and ceremonies for its own guidance, so long as such do not contravene the laws of the land. The Christian Society possesses such power within this limit that she is not to decree anything contrary to the laws of the Bible. All Societies have this authority from the nature of the case, the Christian Church has it by Divine right:—"Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in Heaven." (S. Matthew xviii. 18.)

Every Society has unworthy members: so also, alas, has the Church of Christ.

Every Society has its own signs and watchwords: so also has the Christian Society. The language of religion may be used in the presence of unholy persons and they will not comprehend it, for the truths of the Gospel are spiritually discerned.

Every Society has its mysteries: so also has the Holy Catholic Church. There is the mystery of the

two Sacraments; the mystery of the Atonement; the mystery of the faith once for all delivered to the saints. In the Primitive Church the Apostles' Creed was not committed openly to writing, but was taught orally to the Catechumen, and handed down from one generation to another.

Every Society to preserve its vitality must have regular meetings. The Christian Society has such on Sundays and other days. I have met with some few people who seem to flatter themselves that they are very good Christians, although they do forsake the assembling of themselves together. It would surely be pertinent for such people to put to themselves the question, would they, under the same circumstances, be considered good members of any Society.

In every Society office is everything, and the man who bears the office nothing. If the Christian Minister is held in honour and respect is paid to him, it is not to himself, but to his office. The New Testament is full of this, that Ministers are to be esteemed, and yet not only for their own sake or personal worth, but as endued by Christ with office, as Ambassadors of Christ, as Stewards of the mysteries of God :—"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls as they that must give account." (Hebrews xiii. 17.)

In every Society it is the rule that obedience be rendered to the officers of the Society. Without this no Society could hold together for any length of time. The same rule holds in the Christian Society, which is the Holy Catholic Church. S. Paul writing to Timothy and to Titus, gives them directions as to how they should rule the Church of Christ. Speaking to the presbyters of Ephesus, he tells them that the Holy Ghost has made them overseers of the Church of God; and in his Epistles he exhorts Christians to submit themselves to those placed over them in the Lord.

Every Society to remain the same Society must be one in all its branches. And every Society, if it is to last more than one generation, must have some means of propagating itself; of handing down to others its laws, its institutions, its mysteries, its doctrines. In other words, continuity belongs to every Society which has a history. Other characteristics which I have mentioned are necessary for the well-being of any Society; continuity is essential to its very existence. In the text, two marks of a true Church are given, first, continuing in the Apostles' doctrine; and second, continuing in the Apostles' fellowship. Some people seem to suppose that doctrine is enough in itself to constitute a Church; but, according to our text, fellowship is necessary as well as doctrine. Some, indeed, imagine

that nothing more is necessary to form a Church than to get together a number of persons professing the same doctrines; but the Christian Church is not a name for a number of individuals holding the same opinions; it is a Society, having succession through the centuries from Christ and His Apostles. Doctrine alone is not sufficient; there must also be continuity.

> "Roots, wood, bark, and leaves, singly perfect may be,
> But clapt hodge podge together they don't make a tree."

Let me illustrate this question of continuity from the Orange Society. Suppose I am an Orangeman, and I disagree with some of the working or methods of the Orange Society; and that I leave the original Society and form a new one. Even if I adopted all the laws, doctrines, regalia, aims, and objects of the Parent Society, a Society so formed by me would not be the Orange Society for all that. I might call it the Orange Society, but that would not make it so. It might be a very good Society, and answer excellent purposes; its members might be more respectable, more powerful, more faithful to their principles, than the members of the old Society; but it would not be the original Orange Society.

Or let me illustrate this question of continuity from the Craft of Freemasons. Suppose that I am a Free-

mason; and, in consequence of being offended by some action of my brethren, I take all the doctrines, secrets, signs, and passwords, and start a new Society, and admit persons into it; such a collection of persons would not be recognized as a Freemasons' Lodge.

Christ founded only one Church, and for any denomination of Christians to show that they belong to it, it is necessary for them to prove that they have continued both in its doctrine, and in its fellowship.

It is not strange that an essential condition of the life of any human Society which has a history, should also be an essential condition of the Christian Society, which is the Holy Catholic Church. That the Church of Christ has continuity is not a matter of opinion but of history. Christ when appointing the first Ministers of His Church said to them, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." One who received his commission afterwards from the ascended Christ, writes to the first Bishop of Ephesus, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." (2 Timothy i. 6.) "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (ii. 2.) History records that this was done, and that the Holy Catholic Church of to-day is in succession from the Apostles.

Some men, having a zeal of God but not according to knowledge, have dissented from this original Society, and have started a Society for themselves, ordaining men to offices as in the old Society, and teaching many of its doctrines. Of such Societies, so formed by men, I will only say that judged, not merely by the Bible and History, but by the constitution of every historical human Society they may be very excellent in their own way, and have many worthy members, yet they cannot be the original Society founded by Christ.

Continuity in every Society which has a history, is kept up through the chief officers. The chief officers instal their successors, and hand on to them their authority. History informs us that this has always obtained in the Church of Christ.

How do we Irish Churchmen stand in regard to this question of continuity? Some people seem to think that because Roman Catholics are in the majority in this country, the Church of Rome is the native Church of Ireland. If these people had lived in the age of S. Athanasius and visited certain places, they would have concluded that the Arians formed the Church of the place; for, in many localities, the Arians were in the majority. I have heard with shame of some English Churchmen, when making a tour in this country, going to worship in Roman Catholic Churches. With shame

have I heard of it that any clergyman or layman of the Anglican Church should be so ignorant of Church history. It is bad enough for a layman to commit the sin of schism, but how much worse for a clergyman, for "if gold rust, what will iron do?" The historic position of the Church of Ireland is briefly this: There was a native Church of Ireland in this country for centuries before the Church of Rome set a foot on our shores. Except Spain, indeed, Ireland was the last country in Europe to submit to the Pope. In the twelfth century the English government forced the authority of the Roman Church on us; but our submission to the foreign authority of Rome did not change our ministerial succession. Was that succession broken at the time of the Reformation? History is explicit enough on this point. At the Reformation the Irish Bishops met together to consider what they would do, whether they would remain as they were, or reject the peculiar doctrines and the authority of the Church of Rome, which they had received in the twelfth century. Nineteen Bishops voted for Reformation, and two, Walsh, Bishop of Meath, and Leverous, Bishop of Kildare, voted against; and these two resigned their Sees, and shortly after died. The Church of Ireland continued the same Church which it had been before, only purified, with the same Bishops, Priests,

and Deacons. Some thirty years after, the Bishop of Rome determined to win back the Irish to his authority; but how was he to find clergy to officiate in this country? Walsh and Leverous were dead; and all the other Irish Bishops had reformed. Acting contrary to a Canon of the Catholic Church, he had some Clergy ordained on the Continent for Ireland; and these men were only too successful in bringing the majority of the Irish again under the sway of Rome, for the people had been left without any teaching, and had not been given either the Bible or Book of Common Prayer in their own tongue. It is a matter of history that the Church of Rome has not in Ireland to-day a single Bishop, Priest, or Deacon possessing native Irish Orders; whereas, the Church of Ireland is in direct succession from the primitive Church of the country.

I have dwelt on this question of continuity because, that while many see the necessity of abiding in the Apostles' doctrine, they do not see the same necessity for abiding in the Apostles' fellowship. According to our text both are equally essential.

But perhaps someone imperfectly acquainted with the Bible will say, "Why do you not preach the Gospel instead of telling us about the Church?" or, "Would it not be better if you preached about Christ instead of about the Church?" I reply that I cannot preach

about the Church without also preaching at the same time its Founder, Christ; and that I humbly conceive that, in preaching about the Church, I am following the example of Christ and His Apostles, and preaching the Gospel. The Kingdom of God, or its equivalent phrase—the Kingdom of Heaven, is the title given generally in the New Testament to the Church of Christ; and if you take up an English Concordance to the Bible, you will see the large place which this subject occupied in the preaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He began His ministry by proclaiming, "The Kingdon of Heaven is at hand." When He sent out His twelve Apostles, He gave them commandment, "Go preach, saying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." At Capernaum, He said, "I must preach the Kingdom of God to other cities also, for therefore am I sent." Many of His parables were delivered to explain the nature of this Kingdom. During the forty days He remained on earth after His Resurrection, He was engaged in "Speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." And His Apostle, S. Paul, during his two years at Rome was occupied in "Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ."

If I speak of the Church, I speak of that which is dear to Christ; of that for which "He gave Himself";

of that which is called in the word of God "The Body of Christ," "The Household of Faith," "The Family of God," "The Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that love thee."

Church Government.

II.

Church Government.

Titus i. 5.

"For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee."

F you look into a copy of the Book of Common Prayer published previous to the year 1870, you will see the title, "The United Church of England and Ireland." Disestablishment severed us from England, in the way of State control; but although it robbed us of the endowments of the Church bequeathed by our pious forefathers, it did not change our doctrines or government, consequently we remained the same Church, cast down, but not destroyed, and therefore kept the title which we had for centuries, "The Church of Ireland." Some say that this title is an arrogant assumption, and call us "The Episcopal Church"; but if we took to ourselves this name, there would be arrogance in it; for the Eastern Church, the Church of Rome, the Scandinavian Church, the Armenian Church, the Nestorian, and the

so-called Jansenist Church of Holland are all Episcopal in their form of Government; so that we, although *an* Episcopal Church, have no right to the title of *the* Episcopal Church.

I have noticed that when some Presbyterians wish to be uncourteous, they speak of our form of Church Government as Prelacy. A Prelate is another name for a Bishop, and our form of Church Government may therefore be denominated Prelatic. It was only lately I discovered from a good Presbyterian friend what was the nature of the sarcasm, supposed to underlie the terrible word Prelacy. He told me that the word Prelacy conveyed a formidable idea to the minds of some people; that it was supposed to signify tyranny and intolerance; that in the opinion of those who use the word Prelacy in this terrifying sense, Bishops are appointed for the express purpose of oppressing Rectors, and Rectors for the express purpose of oppressing unfortunate Curates. It never had struck me until I heard this explanation, what an exceedingly oppressed race of men the Clergy of our Church appear! In regard to the question of tyranny under our form of Church Government, I may appeal to the testimony of the numerous Nonconformists who have publicly declared that there is more liberty of thought and of action in the Anglican Church than in their own

denominations. The Church of Ireland is, indeed, particularly democratic. In our General Synod, and in our Diocesan Synods, there are two lay representatives for every Clergyman. Had I been a layman, I would have strenuously opposed such an arrangement. It seems an indignity to the laity to imply that it takes two of them to be equal to one Clergyman! The Methodists admit no "laymen" into their assemblies to adjudicate on questions of Divinity or Morals; neither do the Presbyterians, for according to Presbyterian formularies, the Ruling Elders differ in nothing from the Preaching Elders, except that to the latter pertains the power to ordain. I think that in this, these denominations are more Scriptural than we, for I can find no instance in the New Testament, or in early Church History, of laymen being admitted to sit in a Council with Bishops and Presbyters, and adjudicate on Theology; but, I mention the fact to show that tyranny is one of the last charges which can be sustained against the Prelatic form of Church Government.

And here I will mention with all candour, another point in which these denominations are more Scriptural than we. They have a strict discipline both for the Ministers and for the people. We have some discipline for the Clergy, but very little for the laity. A short time since an Act of Discipline was passed by the

General Synod, which is decidedly an improvement on the previous state of things, as far as Clerical Discipline is concerned; but the matter of Lay Discipline is left much as it was. I leave it to any reader of the New Testament whether we are Scriptural in this matter or no.

Who have the power to ordain Ministers, and what constitutes valid Ordination, are questions most interesting and important to every lover of the pure Gospel. Many persons who have never studied the subject think that education, and piety, and zeal in turning men from wickedness make a person a Christian Minister without any ecclesiastical ceremony or authority. Now suppose the workmen in one of our large factories were to determine to appoint a Minister from among their own number; and suppose that they thought it necessary to appoint him by the laying-on of hands; and that they elected one of themselves to ordain the man whom they had chosen as their Minister; would that ordination make the man so chosen a Clergyman, with power to preach the word, and administer the Sacraments of Christ? All of you who have studied the New Testament on the subject will at once answer "No"; and if I ask you "Why?" you will reply, "Because a person so elected has no authority to ordain; not having the power himself to officiate as a Minister, he cannot

give away that which he does not possess; and while the persons who choose him may call him a Clergyman, that does not make him so, any more than the calling by Mr. Booth of certain officials of the Salvation Army "Captains," makes them officers of the British Army. If you apply this to other companies of men, you will see that the case is not altered, be the men ever so educated and pious; so that it stands to reason that there must be some constituted authority to appoint Clergymen, as a man cannot give away that which he himself has never received. Bear in mind we are not now discussing what makes a man a *faithful* Minister, but what makes him a Minister at all; nor are we discussing whether there is any special grace imparted by the laying-on of hands, but whether there is a settled power in the Church of Christ to appoint Ministers. It is evident there must be a settled power, else there would soon be anarchy. All Societies have certain laws. Christ formed His disciples into a Society; and this Society as well as others has order, and is governed by certain laws. You see this exemplified in the Civil State. Since the kingdom of England became a kingdom, there has always been a settled power for appointing Judges. Suppose now that all the Barristers in the kingdom were to meet together and nominate a Judge, would that appointment be valid? You reply at once

"No; for Barristers are not the settled power for appointing Judges."

You will see that the case would not be altered if all the existing Judges were unjust and incompetent, and the men appointed by the Barristers rigidly upright and learned in the law. In the same way, also, since the Christian Society was formed there has ever existed in it a settled power to appoint its officers; and if you read Ecclesiastical History you will find that from the time of the Apostles up to the Sixteenth Century that power was exercised everywhere, and always, by the first order in the Christian Ministry, or in other words by Bishops. That bad men and incompetent have been so appointed Ministers, does not invalidate their ordination: Judas was truly an Apostle, although he became a bad man.

Presbyterians speak at times as if different degrees in the Christian Ministry were one of the greatest impieties; but they themselves have this imparity, for they also, like ourselves, have, according to their formularies, three orders, although with a difference—1, Preaching Elders; 2, Ruling Elders; and 3, Deacons.

The Preface to the Ordinal defines in what valid Ordination consists:—"It is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and Ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these

Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. Which offices were evermore had in such reverend estimation, that no man might presume to execute any of them, except he were first called, tried, and examined, and known to have such qualities as are requisite for the same; and also by public Prayer, with Imposition of Hands, were approved and admitted thereunto by lawful Authority. And therefore, to the intent that these Orders may be continued, and reverently used and esteemed in the Church of Ireland; no man shall be accounted or taken to be a lawful Bishop, Priest, or Deacon in the Church of Ireland, or suffered to execute any of the said Functions, except he be called, tried, examined, and admitted thereunto according to the Form hereafter following, or hath had formerly Episcopal Consecration or Ordination."

These words I have quoted, "Holy Scripture and Ancient Authors" mark out the line I shall take in speaking to you this evening. And first I will speak to you of the latter—The testimony of History in favour of Episcopacy. Dissenters will not deny that this line of argument is of great weight, for they themselves use it in proof of the Divine institution of the Christian Sabbath. Concerning the change from the seventh to the first day of the week, that is from the Jewish to

the Christian Sabbath, we reason in this way. If the change from the seventh to the first day of the week had not been made during the lifetime of the Apostles, there would be some notice in history of the change having been made; but we find no such notice. If the change, again, had been made after the Apostles' time, it must have caused bitter dissensions and schisms; but there is no record of any second opinion on the subject. In the same way we reason in behalf of Episcopacy. We find at present nine-tenths of Christendom Episcopal in form of Government. If Episcopacy was not a Divine institution, there would be some record in history of the time and mode of its introduction, especially if it be such an abuse and wrong as its opponents try to show. Surely the men who died rather than renounce the pure Gospel, would have lifted up their voice against Episcopacy if it had been introduced as a new thing at any time. In all ages of the Church, and especially in primitive times, there were righteous men who would have protested against so fundamental a change in Church order; but we search in vain through all the pages of history for any such protest, or for any mention of the introduction of Episcopacy. Again, If Episcopacy had not been the rule in the Christian Church from the beginning, so violent a change, no matter when made or by whom,

would have produced endless dissensions and divisions. Now we find controversies in the early Church on almost every point of the Christian Faith; even the time of keeping Easter was keenly debated; but in the pages of history for over sixteen hundred years there is no record of any controversy on the question of Episcopacy. We say, then, to any one who affirms that Episcopacy was not the original form of Church Government, "Tell us when it was introduced, and by whom." Our Lord said that the gates of hell should not prevail against His Church; but, if we are to accept the statement of Non-episcopalians and believe all that they say about Episcopacy, the gates of hell did prevail against the Church within fifty years of the death of the longest-lived of the Apostles.

I have given you a very slight sketch of the testimony of history; and while I have not time in a lecture to go into the evidence minutely, I would ask your attention a little longer to the same kind of evidence.

We start with the fact that nine-tenths of Christendom at present is Episcopal. We do not use it as an argument; but as a stern fact to be accounted for. If Episcopacy was not the order from the beginning, it must have been a mighty revolution which produced so radical a change. Nine-tenths of Christendom at present is Episcopal; and if you go back to the

Reformation, you will find universal Christendom Episcopal.

Amidst all the fierce controversies which raged at that time, there seemed to be no two opinions about Episcopacy. It is true that the Lutherans and others gave up Episcopacy—gave it up, but did not reject it; for they declared that they would gladly retain it if they could. In England and Ireland the Bishops at the Reformation joined in reforming the Church; but no Bishop on the Continent joined in the movement; and the Continentals said that of two evils they chose the least, gave up Bishops rather than the pure faith; protesting at the same time that if any Bishop joined in reformation they would gladly retain the ancient form of Church Government. Of the English Reformers who retained Episcopacy many bravely died at the stake, while Presbyterianism was introduced by men who, in the Marian persecution, cowardly fled for their lives to the Continent; and then, when all was in safety, returned to upset the settled order of the Episcopal Church which had been watered by the blood of her noble army of martyrs. The men, you will see, who set up the new form of Church Government, acted in opposition to the expressed opinions of Continental Reformers; and they could not put forward, like their brethren on the Continent, any plea of necessity. Whether that excuse of

necessity was, on the Continent, a valid one, is, of course, another matter.

It will be satisfactory as well as interesting to you to have the testimony of the Continental Reformers. Grotius writes, "The Episcopate of which we treat was received by the universal Church." "The Episcopate had its commencement in the time of the Apostles."

Melancthon writes: "I would to God it lay in my power to restore the government of Bishops; for I see what sort of Church we shall have, the ecclesiastical polity being dissolved. I do see that hereafter will grow up a greater tyranny in the Church than ever was before." To Luther he writes, "Zuingle has sent here in print his confession of faith. You would say neither more nor less than that he is not in his senses. At one stroke he would do away with all ceremonies, and he would have no Bishops."

Calvin writes to the Protector of England, "If they would give us such a hierarchy in which the Bishops have such a pre-eminence as that they do not refuse to be subject to Christ and to depend upon Him as their only Head, and refer all to Him; then I will confess that they are worthy of all Anathemas, if any such be found who will not reverence it, and submit themselves to it with the utmost obedience."

Beza, the friend and successor of Calvin at Geneva, writes, "I never intended to impugn the Ecclesiastical Polity of the Church of England. If there are any who reject the whole order of Episcopacy, God forbid that any person of sound mind should assent to the madness of such men."

Such is the testimony of the Reformers. So it would seem that no one who wilfully rejects Episcopacy can pretend to be a good Protestant.

We have seen that at the time of the Reformation all Christians were Episcopalians; and, if you examine Church History from the Reformation back to the Apostolic Age, you will find Episcopacy universal.

If you take some century, say very early in the Christian era, you will find in the Ecclesiastical History of it, the names of the Bishops who filled the various Sees.

The Council of Ephesus met in the year 431, and condemned the Nestorians. In the year 1852, the Archbishop of Canterbury sent out the Rev. Geo. Percy Badger on a mission to the Nestorian Church, which Church had been brought into notice by the Euphrates Expedition, sent out by the British Government in 1835. Mr. Badger found the Nestorians possessing the three-fold Ministry of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons; that is to say, they had brought Episcopacy with them from

the time they had been separated from the Eastern Church in the year 431.

The Council of Nicæa was held in the year 325, and was attended by 318 Bishops; so that there can be no doubt that Episcopacy was the form of Church Government in the year 325.

I will next present to you the testimony of Christian writers, who lived before the Council of Nicæa.

Origen (A.D. 230), speaking of the debts in the Lord's Prayer, says, "There is one debt peculiar to Deacons, another to Priests, and another to Bishops, which is the greatest of all, and is exacted by the Saviour of the whole Church."

Tertullian (A.D. 192), says that "the power of baptizing is lodged in the Bishop; but it may be also exercised by Priests and Deacons, though not without the Bishop's commission."

Irenæus was a native of Asia Minor, and was appointed Bishop of Lyons in the year 179; and this is the witness he bears in behalf of Episcopacy, "We can enumerate those who were ordained to be Bishops in the several Churches, and who they were who succeeded them down to our own times. And had the Apostles known any hidden mysteries, they would have committed them to those men to whom they committed the Churches themselves; for they desired to have them in

all things perfect and unreprovable, whom they left to be their successors, and to whom they committed their own Apostolic authority." Again he writes, "Polycarp was not only the pupil of the Apostles, and lived with many who had seen our Lord, but also was by the Apostles constituted Bishop of the Church of Smyrna, whom we ourselves saw when we were young." That Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna, in the modern sense of the word, is evident from the fact that there were many Clergy at Smyrna; as also from the distinct record which we have of his martyrdom. This brings us down to the age of the Apostles; and we see that Episcopacy was the only form of Church Government then known.

Ignatius was a contemporary of Polycarp, and, as early writers tell us, was appointed by the Apostles to the Bishopric of Antioch. He suffered martyrdom in Rome in the year A.D. 107. In one of his Epistles, of the genuineness of which there is no doubt in the mind of any scholar, he writes, "Give heed to your Bishop, that God may give heed to you. I give my life for those who are subject to the Bishop, the Presbyters, and Deacons; and may I have my portion in God with them." That Ignatius spoke of Bishops in the modern sense of the word must be patent to every candid reader, as he mentions the three orders, Bishop, Priest, and

Deacon, and counsels those to whom he writes to be obedient to the Bishop.

And what is the witness of the earliest Ecclesiastical Historians? The earliest Historian whose writings have come down to us is Hegesippus. About the year A.D. 160 he wrote a History of Christianity from the Crucifixion of Christ to his own time. In this he informs us that S. James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and that after his martyrdom, "his cousin Symeon, son of Clopas, was appointed Bishop, whom all put forward as succeeding Bishop because he was a cousin of the Lord. On this account they called the Church a Virgin for the reason that it was not yet corrupted by idle words. But Thebuthis began now secretly to corrupt it, because of his not being made Bishop." That Hegesippus refers to S. James and Symeon as Bishops of Jerusalem in our acceptation of the term Bishop is evident from the fact that there were many Presbyters at the time in the Church at Jerusalem, and that one of these began to stir up strife on the death of S. James, because that he had not been appointed Bishop. This is the witness of Hegesippus with regard to the Church of Jerusalem. Now listen to his testimony concerning other Churches: "When I was at Rome," he says, "I made out the succession of Bishops down to Anicetus; and in each succession, and in each city, things are as

the Law, and the Prophets, and the Lord commanded."

The next earliest historian is Eusebius, who was born A.D. 270. He asserts that the Episcopate was handed down from the Apostles. In his history, he writes of the first successors of the Apostles; of how Symeon after James ruled the Church in Jerusalem; of how Clement was the third Bishop of Rome; of Ignatius as being the second who ruled the Church of Antioch, etc. There can be no possible doubt in the mind of any reader of Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, that the Author was well acquainted with the subject, and that he believed that Episcopacy was the sole form of Church Government from the time of the Apostles to his own.

I do not understand how any reader of the earliest Christian writings and of the earliest Church histories which have come down to us, can have any doubt that there were in the Church of Christ from the time of the Apostles, three Orders of the Ministry, Bishops, Priests, and Deacons. It seems to me that the evidence for this is as clear as that for the genuineness and authenticity of any book of the New Testament, and much stronger than the evidence for some of those books. It is on the evidence of these Saints and Martyrs I have quoted that we accept the books of the New Testament as inspired; and how can we, as sane men, receive their

witness in one case, and reject it in the other? No men ever did so until they had set up a new form of Christianity, discarding Bishops; and then, for the first time, the evidence of the early Christians in behalf of Episcopacy was rejected. According to the evidence of the earliest Christian writers, Episcopacy was established by the Apostles; it must therefore be the best way of carrying on the affairs of the Church, and most in agreement with the will of Christ, for during the forty days after the Resurrection He instructed His Apostles in "the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." Have we any right, therefore, to alter the state of things set in order by the Apostles of Christ? To claim authority to do so, a man must give satisfactory proof either that he is inspired, or that he has received a fresh revelation from God.

All opponents of Episcopacy who are scholars, and have given their attention to early Ecclesiastical History, admit that Episcopacy was firmly established about the middle of the Second Century; that is to say, within some fifty years of the death of S. John. The earliest Christian writings prove more than this; for they tell us that Episcopacy was established by the Apostles; and they trace the succession of Bishops in various Sees from the Apostles. From these earliest writings of Christians which we possess, we learn that during the

lifetime of some of the Apostles, Polycarp was Bishop of Smyrna, and Ignatius Bishop of Antioch. Some of the early writers, indeed, state that these two Martyrs were appointed to their Bishoprics by the Apostles of our Lord. But suppose we take the admission of Non-episcopal scholars that Episcopacy was firmly established at the middle of the Second Century, there is this nice crux for those who reject Episcopacy;—Was it possible for Episcopacy *gradually* to grow up and firmly root itself in the short space of some fifty years after the death of S. John? If there was not time for it to grow up gradually in those few years subsequent to the death of the longest-lived of the Apostles, it must have been sprung upon the Church suddenly in the nature of a revolution. Is it conceivable that the Apostolic form of Church Government could in that pure age of Christianity be violently overturned without protest, controversy, or schism?

Another dilemma which presents itself to the opponents of Episcopacy is this. The men who are accused by them of having upset in the earliest age of the Church the Presbyterian form of Church Government, and introduced Episcopacy in its stead, are the men who chose from among a number of writings the Books of the New Testament, all of which we believe to be inspired. On their word and good faith we receive

them, and if those men were so unrighteous as to overturn the settled order which Christ and His Apostles left in the Church, and introduce Episcopacy; or to stand tamely by without protest while wicked men did so; how are we to trust them, that they have handed down to us the sacred writings uncorrupted, just as they received them from Apostles and Evangelists? If they were capable of the one wickedness, how can we trust them in this other matter?

Before leaving the argument from history, let me refer to the evidence of S. Jerome. I have only time to do so briefly. He is sometimes quoted as in favour of the Presbyterian form of government. It is, I think, evident from the works of this Father that certain Bishops were beginning to exercise or lay claim to that autocratic authority which was finally consummated in the See of Rome. Against this S. Jerome wrote, claiming for Presbyters their due place and authority in the Church. In the earliest times Bishops did not take any important step nor adjudicate on any weighty matter affecting their Dioceses without consulting the Presbyters. Now they began to act autocratically without the counsel of their Clergy. While Jerome protests against any such abuse of power, and while he claims for Presbyters their own proper station and authority, he yet allows that Bishops exercise office and authority

to which Presbyters have no claim. "For what does a Bishop," he asks, "which a Presbyter does not, Ordination excepted?" S. Jerome then plainly says that a Bishop, and not Presbyters, possesses the power of Ordination.

Drowning men grasp at a straw, and in our own day the opponents of Episcopacy have some of them claimed the late Bishop of Durham as on their side. Now what was the opinion of Dr. Lightfoot? It was that the Apostles established Diocesan Episcopacy in every Church immediately under their own supervision, and that this quickly extended to every Church in Christendom. Of course, it stands to reason that every Church would adopt that order which had been set up by the Apostles. In his Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians (page 234) he writes, "It has been seen that the institution of an Episcopate must be placed as far back as the closing years of the first century, and that it cannot without violence to historical testimony be dissociated from the name of S. John." On page 267 he writes, "If the preceding investigation be substantially correct, the Threefold Ministry can be traced to Apostolic direction; and, short of an express statement, we can possess no better assurance of a Divine appointment, or at least, a Divine sanction." In the preface to the Sixth Edition, he writes, "While disclaiming any

change in my opinions, I desire equally to disclaim the representations of those opinions which have been put forward in some quarters. The object of the Essay was an investigation into the origin of the Christian Ministry. The result has been a confirmation of the statement in the English Ordinal, 'It is evident unto all men diligently reading Holy Scripture and Ancient Authors, that from the Apostles' time there have been these orders of Ministers in Christ's Church—Bishops, Priests, and Deacons.' But I was scrupulously anxious not to overstate the evidence in any case; and it would seem that partial and qualifying statements, prompted by this anxiety, have assumed undue proportions in the minds of some readers, who have emphasized them to the neglect of the general drift of the Essay." In his Sermon preached at the Church Congress at Wolverhampton, on the 3rd October, 1887, the Bishop, speaking of the Church of England, said, "Is she to be blamed because she retained a form of Church Government which had been handed down in unbroken continuity from the Apostolic times?" In his Address at the Re-opening of the Chapel, Auckland Castle, 1st August, 1888, he said, "We cannot afford to sacrifice any portion of the faith once delivered to the Saints; we cannot surrender for any immediate advantages the Threefold Ministry which we

have inherited from Apostolic times and which is the historic backbone of the Church."

I next proceed to direct your attention to some proofs of Episcopacy drawn from Holy Scripture.

In the Jewish Church the Ministry was threefold—1, the High Priest; 2, the Priests; 3, the Levites. The early Christians were of the opinion that the Orders in the Christian Ministry corresponded in some sense to those. Clement, who is mentioned by S. Paul in his Epistle to the Philippians as having his name in the book of life, writes of the three Orders in the Christian Ministry thus: — "His own peculiar services are assigned to the High Priest; and to the Priests their own proper place has been assigned; and on the Levites are incumbent their own special ministrations."

Look into the New Testament, and you will find that during the lifetime of our Lord on earth the Ministry was threefold—1, our Lord; 2, the Apostles; 3, the Seventy.

During the lifetime of the Apostles also there were the three Orders—1, the Apostles; 2, Elders or Presbyters; 3, Deacons.

After the death of the last Apostle there was, as we have seen from the history of the early Church, a threefold Ministry—1, Bishops; 2, Presbyters; 3, Deacons. It is to be noted that in the New Testament the titles

of Bishop and Presbyter stand for the same office, but our contention is not for titles, but for offices. If, for example, the President of the Methodist Conference were a Bishop in succession from the Apostles, exercising in historical descent the office of the First Order of the Ministry, we should grant that he was a true Bishop, whether he were called President, Moderator, Superintendent, or any other title. The Apostles constituted after the Ascension the First Order in the Ministry, but it would seem that after their death, Christians hesitated about giving the title of Apostle to those who succeeded to their office of governing the Church, and gave them as a rule the title of Bishop. This is not a mere surmise. Theodoret (A.D. 423) writes thus—"Those now called Bishops were called Apostles, but in process of time the name of Apostle was confined to those who were really Apostles, and the name of Bishop was confined to those who were anciently called Apostles."

Read the Acts of the Apostles, and you will see that the Apostles reserved to themselves the power of Ordination. When they wished to ordain Deacons they called the multitude of the disciples together and said, "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom *we may appoint* over this business." That they ordained

Elders or Presbyters as well as Deacons is distinctly recorded in the Acts of the Apostles.

The Apostles at first possessed the sole power of Ordination, and there is not a single instance in the New Testament of their handing on this power to the Presbyters in general. There are instances of their committing this power to one person in a certain Church. In our text, for example, S. Paul writes to Titus, "For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee." To Timothy at Ephesus, again, he writes, "Lay hands suddenly on no man." (1 Epistle v. 22.) "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." (2 Epistle ii. 2.) This is S. Paul's charge to Timothy at Ephesus, and it is most important to recollect, in connection with this, the charge which he gave to the Presbyters of this same Church, of which charge you have a full account in the Twentieth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It was a touching scene. He sent for the Ephesian Elders to meet him at Miletus. It was the last time he was to see them, and surely if he were ever to give them authority to ordain, now was the time to do so, or if he had given them such authority before, as he now warns them solemnly how to exercise

their other duties, he would not neglect to warn them how to exercise this. He does not exhort them in this duty, but, "Take heed unto yourselves," he says, "and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Nothing is plainer in all Holy Scripture than this, that not to the Presbyters of Ephesus, but to S. Timothy, does S. Paul commit the power of Ordination.

1 Timothy iv. 14 has been quoted by certain opposers of Episcopacy to show that Timothy was not ordained by S. Paul, but by elders of the Church ; in other words, that he was ordained by the Second Order of the Ministry, and not by the First. "Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery." The first question which naturally arises here is, Who were the persons who composed the Presbytery ? Every Bishop was a Presbyter, although every Presbyter was not a Bishop. S. Peter the Apostle, for example, calls himself a Presbyter. When, therefore, S. Paul exhorts Timothy not to neglect the gift which was given him by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, it is a complete begging of the question to assume that such Presbytery was held without the presence of any of the Apostles.

But the passage which has just been quoted is not the only one on the point of the ordination of S. Timothy. S. Paul, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, i. 6, says, "I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." Observe the difference of the words used in the two passages—"*With* the hands of the Presbytery," "*By* my hands." Put these two passages together, and you have an exact description of our Ordination to the Priesthood. The Rubric says, "The Bishop, with the Priests present, shall lay their hands severally upon the head of every one that receiveth the order of Priesthood." The Ordination, we hold, would be perfectly valid if performed by the Bishop alone, and the Presbyters are brought in merely as consenting parties.

We have glanced at the constitution of the Church in Ephesus and in Crete, and we turn our attention next to the Church at Jerusalem. From the Acts of the Apostles and S. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians we learn that S. James occupied a position of pre-eminence in that Church, which was the cradle of Christianity. You may call that position which he occupied by the name of Bishop, Apostle, Angel, or President; the name does not affect the office. And you will notice in passing how the acts of the Council of Jerusalem are destructive

of the Romish idea of the supremacy of S. Peter. The first hint we have of the position which S. James occupied at Jerusalem is in the Epistle to the Galatians, where S. Paul tells us that three years after his conversion he went up to Jerusalem to see S. Peter, and he saw none other of the Apostles save James, the Lord's brother. (Galatians i. 18, 19.) This visit is recorded in the Acts of the Apostles (ix. 26-28), as an introduction to the Church in Jerusalem. In the Twelfth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have the account of S. Peter's miraculous deliverance from prison. On his arrival at the house of Mary, he says, "Go and show these things unto James and to the brethren." Why does he particularize S. James? In the Fifteenth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have an account of the Council of Jerusalem. S. Peter, S. Paul, and S. Barnabas severally address the Council, and at the close S. James sums up and says, "My sentence is." Evidently S. James was President of the Council. In the Twenty-first Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have a record of another journey of S. Paul to Jerusalem; and S. Luke, who accompanied him on this occasion, says that, on the day following their arrival, "We went in unto James, and all the Elders were present." Why unto James more than unto the other Apostles? Once more, S. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians (ii. 12),

writes, "Before that certain came from James, he (S. Peter) did eat with the Gentiles." The word used here, "*from* James," does not mean from James individually, but from him in his official capacity, that is, from the Church in Jerusalem. These references which I have given you cover a space of some seventeen years, during which time S. James occupied the position of Chief Pastor, or Bishop, in the Church at Jerusalem. And this agrees, as we have seen, with the testimony of the earliest Christian writers, which is that S. James was the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

I think I have proved to you, both from Scripture and Church History, that Episcopacy was the earliest form of Church Government. If in doing so I have hurt the feelings of anyone, I sincerely regret it. It has been my desire to speak against doctrines, not against individuals. If the result should be to stir up in the mind of any Churchman feelings of contempt for those who differ from us, I should be the first to deplore it. I have always held that hard words are the least effective method of converting people to our opinions. I am pleased to say that some of my best friends are Dissenters. Some of these friendships date from boyhood, while others have lasted several years. I have never said to my Dissenting friends that there is no difference in our belief. If I said so they would know

I was telling a lie, and I have no doubt, from their straightforwardness, that they would think differently of me from what they do. To say so would also be, in my mind, an insult to them. It would imply that their forefathers had committed the sin of Schism, which S. Paul designates a dividing of the Body of Christ, without excuse. We recognize that there are vital differences between us, but I have always given them credit for sincerity in their belief, and they have always treated me with the same generosity. I think that this candour on both sides goes some way to account for the lasting nature of our friendship, which neither time nor distance has been able to destroy. Yes, I cherish these friends, who differ from me, in my heart, and ever think of them "with deep affection and recollection," whether they wander here by the shores of the mournful and misty Atlantic, or

> "walk
> By the long wash of Australasian seas,
> Far off, and hold their heads to other stars,
> And breathe in converse seasons."

I should not be earnest in my belief if I did not wish them to become Churchmen, but I do not think that I love them less because they are Dissenters; and my constant prayer is that God, for Christ's sake, may lead us into the way of all truth. Whatever differences may

divide us, we are united in this, that the haven where we would be is the same.

As I think of these friends, separated from me in faith but not in affection, there comes up before me the picture which Arthur Hugh Clough has drawn in one of his poems. Two ships lie at eventide close to one another. When the night falls a breeze springs up and bears them onward. All through the hours of darkness they imagine they are sailing side by side, but when the morning breaks they find themselves leagues apart on the wide ocean.

"But O blithe breeze, and O great seas,
Though ne'er, that earliest parting past,
On your wide plain they join again,
Together lead them home at last.

One port, methought, alike they sought,
One purpose hold where'er they fare,—
O bounding breeze, O rushing seas!
At last, at last, unite them there!"

I have to acknowledge my indebtedness in this Lecture to the excellent work, "A Talk about Bishops," by the Rev. Canon Scott, B.D., Rector of S. George's, Dublin.

Prayers in the Congregation: Extempore or Precomposed.

III.

Prayers in the Congregation: Extempore or Precomposed.

S. Matthew xviii. 19.

"Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of My Father which is in Heaven."

AM to speak to you this evening on the subject of whether Public Worship is best conducted extempore or according to a written Liturgy, and any of you who know the history of the Anglican Church must congratulate me that I am at liberty to address you on this subject without fine or imprisonment. When Dissent was dominant in England, I should have subjected myself to heavy penalties, if I had conducted the Service as I have done this evening, or said to you what I am about to say in this lecture. When Dissenters had the ascendancy in England, they passed a law that anyone using the Book of Common Prayer in any "public place of worship or in any private place or family within the Kingdom" was to be fined for the first offence £5; for the second £10;

and for the third offence he was to be punished by "one whole year's imprisonment without bail or mainprize"; so you see that in those days one could not use the Prayer Book, even in his own family, without subjecting himself to fine and imprisonment. "The Directory for the Public Worship of God in the Three Kingdoms" was the book substituted by Nonconformists for the Book of Common Prayer, and a law was passed that if any Minister did not adhere to the rules of the Directory, he was to be fined £2; a penalty apparently light, but one which when frequently exacted became heavy enough; while anyone saying anything in "opposition, derogation, or depraving of the said book" was to be fined in any amount from £5 to £50. At that time hundreds of the parochial Clergy were turned out of their Livings because they would not give up the use of the Book of Common Prayer in public worship, and assent to a creed different from that which they had signed at their Ordination. I do not say these things to make you dislike Dissenters; but I say them because I have heard people speak as if Churchmen had always been wolves, and Dissenters innocent lambs. I do not think there was very much of the nature of the lamb in the hearts of those who dragged Archbishop Sharp out of his carriage and murdered him before the eyes of his daughter; and who judicially murdered Archbishop

Laud. I fear no Church or sect has possessed a monopoly of persecution. Those New England Psalm-Singers, who according to Mrs. Hemans emigrated to America in order to obtain "freedom to worship God," persecuted with remorseless fury the members of the Society of Friends as soon as that Society sprang up in America. That was the sort of freedom to worship God, which those innocents sought, in emigrating to a foreign land,

> "for the right
> Of privately judging, means, simply that light
> Has been granted to *me* for deciding on *you*."

There is just this difference, however, between the Church of Rome and all others who profess and call themselves Christians. The Church of Rome still affirms the principle of persecution, while all the rest of us are willing to confess that any of our forefathers who persecuted were so far bad men, no matter what their profession of piety may have been; and so far as they persecuted, so far did they act contrary to the Gospel of Christ.

In speaking to you of a written Liturgy, I begin with this statement:—There is no instance in the Bible nor in the history of the Christian Church for centuries of an Extempore Service.

Extempore prayer was introduced into England by a Romish Priest named Faithful Commin, who, pretending to be a Protestant, tried in the reign of Queen Elizabeth to upset the work of the Reformation by representing the English Book of Common Prayer as a translation of the Mass, and by setting up Extempore Services in opposition to those of the Established Religion.

I shall clear the way by considering some of the objections put forward against a written Liturgy.

1. It has been said by some that our Service is Popish. The persons who urge this objection are the very same who talk most loudly of the glorious Reformation, and of the martyrs who at the Reformation gave their bodies to be burned rather than renounce the truth. How inconsistent this is! For is not our Prayer Book the work of the same Reformers? and did not some of them die at the stake, clasping it to their bosom? I think it right to detain you for a minute by quoting the testimony of at least one of the Reformers on behalf of the Prayer Book. It is that of Rowland Taylor. Dr. Rowland Taylor was Vicar of the parish of Hadley, in Suffolk, having succeeded to that living on the martyrdom of the Rev. Thomas Bilney. You may read a short account of his life and manner of death in Foxe's "Book of Martyrs." When

Mary came to the throne of England Dr. Taylor was arrested and conveyed to London. On his refusing to renounce the principles of the Reformation, he was dragged back to Aldham Common and there burned to death. When he was preparing for execution he addressed the people, who were mostly his own parishioners, and said, "Good people, I have taught you nothing but God's Holy Word, and those lessons that I have taken out of God's blessed Book, the Holy Bible; and I am come hither this day to seal it with my blood." The witness of such a man will not be slighted by any good Protestant. He writes, "But there was after that, by the most innocent King Edward (for whom God be praised everlastingly) the whole Church Service, with great deliberation, and the advice of the best learned men of the realm; and authorized by the whole parliament, and received and published gladly by the whole realm; which book was never reformed but once, and yet by that reformation it was so fully perfected, according to the rules of our Christian Religion, in every behalf, that no Christian conscience could be offended with anything therein contained. I mean of that Book reformed."

"Who shall dare to violate this priestly book signed by confessors, and consecrated by the blood of so many martyrs! How shall we call them martyrs if we deny

their faith? How shall we celebrate their victory if we dislike their cause? If we believe them to be crowned why shall we deny but that they strove lawfully? So that if they, dying in attestation of this book, were martyrs, why do we condemn the book for which they died?" *(Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Connor.)*

Objectors to the Prayer Book will have to cease railing against it as Popish or they will have to cease talking about the "glorious Reformation." There is no doctrine contained in the Book of Common Prayer which cannot be proved by most certain warrants of Holy Scripture. Nor are there any ceremonies ordered in it which are superstitious. All its Services are for the edification of the people, and are in accordance with the customs of the Christian Church in the purest age of Christianity.

2. Another objection brought against the Prayer Book is that the prayers in the various Services are not particular enough. This objection comes from those who have lost sight of what Public Worship is. Our first object in Public Worship should be to glorify God. We do not go to Church mainly to pray for the supply of our own private wants (that we do in the privacy of our own rooms at home), but to cultivate the Communion of Saints, to remember our neighbours, to put up supplications to God for all sorts and conditions of men.

In worshipping God acceptably thus, we are not to think so much of our own wants as of those of all the faithful in Christ Jesus everywhere. Our prayers and thanksgivings must, therefore, be to a certain extent general; and if you look into our Book of Common Prayer you will see how admirably its Services are suited to the wants of a whole congregation. There are also in the book prayers for special occasions; and a provision made in our Morning and Evening Services for the offering up of petitions or thanksgivings, for any special blessing on behalf of any member of the congregation. And I may add that in the Litany no condition of life is forgotten.

3. It is sometimes said sneeringly by those who believe only in an Extempore Service, that we pray out of a book. Now, suppose a Minister conducting an Extempore Service prays without any forethought, the prayer is extempore as far as he is concerned; but when it passes his lips and is adopted by the congregation, it is as much a precomposed prayer to them as if they prayed it out of a book. But I have been told that numbers of Dissenting Ministers are as particular in preparing their prayers as they are in preparing their sermons. In their case there is no such thing as extempore prayer; both to themselves and their congregations their prayers are as much precomposed as

ours are, only, that in their case the Minister and the congregation are not agreed together beforehand as to what they shall ask from God.

In extempore prayer in public either a person must remain passive while the Minister prays for him, or offer up his own prayer apart from the prayer which the Minister prays, or adopt the Minister's prayer. In the first and second cases there is no congregational prayer, and in the third the worshipper is using a precomposed prayer—that of the Minister.

4. And yet another objection made to our Services is that they are always much the same. This charge of sameness I shall answer chiefly in the words of others. "God is no more delighted with change of expressions than with a repetition of the same; nor will ever be weary of a devout soul for want of a new language." *(Secker.)* "The heart, the affections, love unchangeable things, love old things, love things which endure like the hills of earth and the stars of Heaven." *(Dr. Coit.)* Dr. Talmage says, "There is nothing more killing than ecclesiastical hum-drum. Some persons do not like the Episcopal Church because they have the same prayers every Sunday. But have we not for the last ten years been hearing the same prayers over and over again, the product of a self-manufactured liturgy, that has not the thousandth part of the excellency of those petitions

that we hear in the Episcopal Church." And here is an extract from a secular writer on a secular subject which does more than meet this charge of sameness: "We could never have loved the earth so well if we had had no childhood in it,—if it were not the same earth where the same flowers come up again every Spring that we used to gather with our tiny fingers, as we sat lisping to ourselves on the grass—the same hips and haws on the Autumn hedgerows—the same redbreasts that we used to call 'God's birds' because they did no harm to the precious crops. What novelty is worth that sweet monotony where everything is known, and loved because it is known! The wood I walk in on this mild May day, with the young yellow-brown foliage of the oaks between me and the blue sky, the white star-flowers and the blue-eyed speedwell, and the ground ivy at my feet—what grove of tropic palms, what strange ferns, or splendid broad-petalled blossoms, could ever thrill such deep and delicate fibres within me as this home scene? These familiar flowers, these well remembered bird-notes, this sky, with its fitful brightness, these furrowed and grassy fields each with a sort of personality given to it by the capricious hedgerows—such things as these are the mother-tongue of our imagination, the language that is laden with all the subtle, inextricable associations the fleeting hours of our childhood left

behind them. Our delight in the sunshine on the deep-bladed grass to-day might be no more than the faint perception of wearied souls, if it were not for the sunshine and the grass in the far-off years which still live in us and transform our perception into love." *(George Eliot.)* These words may, in a figure, be transferred to the Book of Common Prayer. Old friends and familiar places are dearest to us. We love the Prayer Book, because it is the Book which Reformers clasped to their breasts at the stake, because it contains the same prayers which we were taught in childhood at a mother's knee, the same prayers which have been prayed by Martyrs and the most eminent Saints of God.

Having answered the Objections against a written Liturgy, suffer me now to point out a few of its Advantages:

1st. It is a guard against Irreverence. Extempore prayers, unfortunately, are not always reverent in their language, indeed they are not seldom somewhat profane. Such prayers do not tend to reverence in the minds of a congregation, and without reverence it is impossible for them to worship God acceptably. Whatever good points Dissenters have, and they have some which are very admirable, reverence is not one of them; and this, I think, may be attributed to the form of

their Service. The Preacher has no hesitation in dragging into his prayer political allusions, allusions to municipal affairs, and to persons who are in any way opposed to him; and the congregation, meanwhile, stand staring around them, or lounge lazily in their pews. That is the way they have of carrying into effect "O come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our Maker."

2nd. A written Liturgy is a preservative against false doctrine. I do not know any Denomination which has discarded a Liturgy without swerving from the faith. The Reformed Church of Switzerland is honeycombed with infidelity. Many people still remember the defection from Presbyterianism in the north of Ireland; and that the various Nonconformist bodies in England have departed from the pure Gospel let the late Mr. Spurgeon be a witness in what is known as the Down-grade Controversy. It was significant and lamentable that almost every paper in England which bore in its title the name of "Christian" took the side of free-thought against the Rev. Chas. Spurgeon.

3rd. A precomposed Service is a complete preventive of the prayers being criticized. In extempore prayer there is a strong tendency in the congregation to get into the habit of criticizing the prayer as well as the sermon. Such criticism often hinders the truth from

finding a permanent place in the heart, and such criticism prevents many petitions from being answered. I dare say you have heard of the preacher who went to officiate one Sunday in Boston. The next day there appeared in one of the local papers a critique on the Preacher's ministrations. The article praised the sermon, but bestowed the greatest praise on the Minister's opening prayer. "We venture to affirm," said the article, "that it was the most eloquent prayer ever addressed to a Boston audience."

4th. And this leads me to notice another advantage of a written Liturgy. It prevents people being prayed at. The Boston critic was not so far wrong when he spoke of the prayer being addressed to the congregation, for it is to them and not to God a good number of extempore prayers are addressed. Not only is there hardly a single petition in many extempore prayers, but I have been told by Dissenters that their Ministers make side thrusts at them in their prayers, saying things of them in their addresses to the Almighty which they have not courage to say directly in their sermons.

5th. And as a precomposed Service is a preventive of criticism on the part of the people, so is it also a preventive of pride on the part of the Minister. In a written Liturgy a Minister is not liable to the tempta-

tion of thinking that he will be heard for his much speaking, nor is he liable to be carried away by vanity from the congratulations of his congregation on the magnificence of his prayers.

6th. There is also this advantage in a fixed form of Service, that the people know what they are going to ask from God, and so can properly prepare beforehand for worshipping Him in spirit and in truth. How many prayers are never answered because the people do not expect beforehand that they will be answered; and how can they who have no precomposed Service cultivate a spirit of expectation when they do not know, on going out to worship, what they may be called on by their Minister to pray for. There is also this advantage with a Service such as ours, that as the people know when they are going to church what they are about to pray for, so also on coming away from church they know and can remember for what they have prayed and given thanks to God. How many petitions are unanswered for the reason that when people utter them they think no more of them.

7th. Another advantage of a written Liturgy is that both clergy and people can agree together as to what petitions and thanksgivings they will present to Almighty God. Our Lord says, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall

be done for them of My Father Which is in Heaven"; and it is difficult to conceive how in extempore prayer this condition of agreement can be fulfilled. Indeed, it is impossible in an extempore Service to have united worship, for the congregation must first listen to the petitions offered up by the Minister; they must next consider them; they must next make them their own by offering them up to God; and by the time they do this, the Minister is several sentences on in front of them. It sometimes happens also that Minister and people are like Oliver Wendell Holmes's dull preacher and lively listener, and to them may be applied his comparison of the small bird and the large one, both of which are flying in the same direction, but the little bird flies under and over and round and round the big one, and arrives first at their destination. No; without a precomposed Service there cannot be a thorough agreement beforehand between Minister and people as to what they shall ask, nor can there really be United Public Worship.

Let me point out to you in a few words the Argument from History for a precomposed Service. I hold here in my hand a translation of the principal Primitive Liturgies. These Liturgies were translated and edited by Presbyterian Divines, and while the editors say that there are interpolations in these Services, they do not

attempt to deny that in the main they are the Services which were in use in the early centuries after Christ. No scholar indeed of any Denomination has any doubt in the matter; so that a precomposed form of Service was the earliest use in the Church of Christ. And for centuries we search in vain through the history of the Christian Church for any other kind of Public Worship. It is well known that the Reformers assented in this matter to the custom which had always obtained throughout Christendom. Calvin, for example, says, "I do highly approve of a fixed form of prayer and ecclesiastical rites, that from it it shall not be lawful for Pastors in the discharge of their duty to depart: 1st, That there may be a provision for the ignorance and unskilfulness of some; 2nd, That the agreement of all the Churches among themselves may more certainly appear; and, 3rd, That the unsettled levity of some who affect novelties may be met. So also it is fit that there should be a fixed Catechism, a fixed administration of the Sacraments, and also a Public Form of Prayer." John Calvin composed a Service for the use of the Protestants at Geneva, John Knox did the same for Scotland, and John Wesley composed one for the members of the Methodist Society. So they who maintain Extempore Prayer in public have arrayed against them the most learned men in their own

Denominations, their own founders, Church History, and the Word of God.

I come finally to consider the testimony of Holy Scripture on the question. I have said that there is no single instance in the Bible of Public Extempore Worship. We have in the Old Testament and in the New, the words of a number of prayers, and there was no short-hand writer in those days to report them. The first Public Worship of which we have an account in the Bible was according to a precomposed form. You may read it in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Book of Exodus. It was an Antiphonal Service; Miriam, the prophetess, and all the women of Israel on the one side, and Moses and all the men of Israel on the other. If the Service had not been precomposed, how could those on the one side speak the same words together, and those on the other side answer them unitedly?

In the Book of Numbers, vi. 24-26, we have the very words given by God to Moses, by which Aaron and his sons were to bless the Children of Israel: "The Lord bless thee and keep thee: the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Thus early in the history of His people, did God signify His approval of a precomposed Service.

In the Tenth Chapter of the Book of Numbers, 35th

and 36th verses, you have the identical words which Moses used when the Ark was lifted for a journey and when it rested again, "And it came to pass when the Ark set forward, that Moses said, Rise up, Lord, and let Thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate Thee flee before Thee. And when it rested he said, Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel."

In Deuteronomy xxi. 7, 8, you have the words commanded to be spoken at the expiation of an uncertain murder, "Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it. Be merciful, O Lord, unto Thy people Israel, whom Thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto Thy people of Israel's charge." If it should be objected that the words of the Service which I have quoted from the Sixth Chapter of the Book of Numbers are a benediction and not a prayer, I say that here in the Service I have last quoted there is a prayer.

Turn now to Deuteronomy xxvi. 5-10, and you will find a precomposed Service for the Offering of the First Fruits, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous; and the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage; and when we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice,

and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression; and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders; and He hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey. And now, behold I have brought the first-fruits of the land which Thou, O Lord, hast given me."

At the twelfth verse of the same chapter you have a precomposed Service for offering tithes to God, with a prayer for a blessing on the land and people of Israel, "When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled; then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite and unto the stranger, to the fatherless and to the widow, according to all Thy commandments which Thou hast commanded me; I have not transgressed Thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them; I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead; but I have hearkened to the voice of the Lord my God, and

have done according to all that Thou hast commanded me. Look down from Thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless Thy people Israel, and the land which Thou hast given us, as Thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey" (vv. 12-15).

In the Fourteenth Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Hosea (vv. 1-3) you have a precomposed prayer for the people of God, "O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy." And let those who speak impiously of God not answering prayers prayed out of a book note the answer which God gives to this prayer: "I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him" (v. 4).

In the Second Chapter of the Book of the Prophet Joel (vv. 15-18) there is a precomposed prayer in a Service for a solemn fast: "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts;

let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them; wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the Lord be jealous for His land, and pity His people."

It is not necessary for me to spend time on the point, but only to draw your attention to it, that the Psalms were mostly composed for Public Worship, that many of them were used in the Temple Service, and some of them on such occasions as the Feast of the Passover.

In the Fourth Chapter of the Acts of the Apostles (vv. 24-30) you have a precomposed Service, for if it had not been precomposed it would have been impossible for the whole company of the disciples to join in it unanimously together, with one heart and one voice. If it should be objected that it could not have been composed for the occasion, and become known by all the disciples, I answer that no such supposition is necessary. It is not a prayer suitable for that occasion only, but eminently suitable, in all its references, to any assembly of the infant Church. "And being let go, they went to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said unto them. And

when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, Thou art God, which hast made Heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of Thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Christ. For of a truth against Thy Holy Child Jesus, Whom Thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and Thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the Name of Thy Holy Child Jesus."

You will see that this prayer touched all the circumstances of the Christian Church at the time, and was most suitable for use on any occasion of Public Worship. It is not necessary, therefore, to suppose that it was composed for this particular occasion.

Reading through the New Testament, we find our Lord and His Apostles engaging in a precomposed form of Service at the Feast of the Passover; and at that Feast our Blessed Lord, in instituting the Sacra-

ment of His Body and Blood, used words which have ever since been reiterated in the Church of Christ wherever this Sacrament has been celebrated according to its first institution. Those words have survived all the changes and chances of the Church of Christ, and are used in our own time as they were in the first century—a fixed form of Service.

We have seen that there can be no united Public Worship without a precomposed Service; and the worship of the Blessed in the life to come would seem, according to many passages in the Revelation of S. John the Divine, to be governed by the same conditions. According to this Book, an extempore Service is as unknown in the Church Triumphant as it is in the Church Militant. In the Book of the Revelation we have several Services described, and not one of them is extempore; but either the form of worship or the very words used are given. Look, for example, at Chapter iv., 8-11: "And the four beasts had each of them six wings about him; and they were full of eyes within; and they rest not day and night saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come. And when those beasts give glory, and honour, and thanks to Him that sat on the Throne, Who liveth for ever and ever, the four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on

the Throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the Throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." In the Fifth Chapter there is the account of another Service of the Blessed, according to a fixed form (vv. 9-14), "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the Book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the Throne, and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in Heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen." In the Seventh Chapter (vv. 9-12) S. John records the

very words by which the glorified saints unite in praising God: "After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the Throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the Throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the Throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the Throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen."

People who object to the sameness of a fixed form of Service should compare the two last Services which I have quoted.

In Revelation xi. 17 there is another precomposed Service: "And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces and worshipped God, saying, We give Thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because Thou hast taken to Thee Thy great power, and hast reigned."

And yet another precomposed Service of the saints in glory we have in the Revelation of S. John xv. 3, 4:

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy Name? for Thou only art holy: for all nations shall come and worship before Thee; for Thy judgments are made manifest." So that according to the Word of God there is no such thing as an Extempore Service in the Church of God present or future.

If, however, we had no Services of the Church Militant or the Church Triumphant recorded in Holy Scripture, the example of our Lord and of His Apostles would be enough to make us in all Public Worship use a written Liturgy, and none other. The Temple and Synagogue Services were according to a fixed form, and our Lord, by worshipping in the Temple, and attending the Synagogue, and taking part in its Service, set His seal to "prayers read out of a book."

And besides the example of Christ and of His Apostles, the most specious argument cannot do away with the fact that in the Lord's Prayer Christ left us a fixed form of prayer; and it should be noted that in this prayer, which Christ commanded His disciples to pray, there is only one original petition; all the others are taken from written Jewish Liturgies.

And I would wish another fact in connection with our Lord's Prayer noted. The Jewish doctors were in the habit of teaching their disciples forms of prayer. S. John the Baptist did the same. The disciples of Christ ask Him to teach them to pray in the same way as John taught his disciples, and He, instead of execrating written prayers, as people now-a-days who are ignorant of the Bible do, complies with their request, and says, "When ye pray say, Our Father, which art in Heaven."

The Sacrament of Baptism.

IV.

The Sacrament of Baptism.

TITUS III. 5.

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."

I FEAR that few professing Christians attach that importance to Baptism which is attached to it in Holy Scripture. I fear that few people reading the Bible notice how often the subject is referred to in the New Testament, or take trouble to study the various passages which speak of it, and try to understand what they say. I fear that many Churchmen, if examined, could not give any distinct answer to the questions, why they have their children baptized, and what benefits they expect them to receive by the Ordinance. There is no excuse for this ignorance and apathy amongst "Protestants," as they have the open Bible; and it is their duty to see what it says on such an important subject as that of Baptism, and to believe *that* instead of forming their belief, as too many do, according to certain popular traditions around them.

It will be allowed by every sincere Christian that Baptism should occupy that proportionate place in our thoughts which it does in the New Testament.

Some Christians if questioned would say that Baptism is nothing more than a decent ceremony of Christianity; others that it is nothing more than giving a child a name. The majority accept Baptism as a matter of course, apparently not troubling themselves to understand it. Now, I always take it that people who accept everything I say as a matter of course do not care what I say; and it is much to be feared that those persons who accept Baptism as a matter of course are perfectly careless on the subject. Why, then, it may be asked, do those people, who have no faith in regard to Christ's Ordinance, bring their children to be baptized? Is it from mere custom? Is it from fear of being thought singular? Is it from an idea of respectability?

In Germany men who are avowed infidels present their children at the Baptismal font, and when they die inscribe on their tombstone, "Hier ruht im Gott." Why do they do so? Do they really believe more than they confess? Does their action show that they have a doubt of their doubts; that there lingers in their mind a suspicion that the Christian Religion may be after all historically, as well as morally true?

Since so many people have no fixed ideas on the

subject of Holy Baptism, and so few reflect on the privileges and blessings conferred by it, and on the sacredness of the obligations and duties it entails on them, our time spent this evening considering the subject will not be spent unprofitably.

Little need be said on the theory that Baptism is only a decent ceremony. To believe it to be nothing more than an empty form would make the essence of the Gospel sheer ritualism, and surely that is a position which no good "Protestant" would maintain.

Almost as little need be said on that most unscriptural theory that Baptism is nothing more than the conferring of a name. It is strange that those people, who pretend to draw all their doctrines from the Bible, should seize, as the only thing in Baptism, a part which is not essential to it at all; and that while they exultingly publish that persons receive the forgiveness of sins and the gift of the Holy Ghost in Services of their own devising, they deny any grace to be given in a Service instituted by Christ. It is well to draw the attention of such people to the fact that while many passages in the New Testament speak of Baptism, not one speaks of it in connection with giving a child a name. And yet these people are so ignorant of the Bible as to throw contempt on our Lord's ordinance of Baptism by asking, "What is Baptism? It is only the registration of a name!"

Before proceeding to enumerate some of the blessings and privileges conferred on us by Christ in our Baptism, I will read to you an extract from the Westminster Confession on the subject: "Baptism is a Sacrament of the New Testament, ordained by Jesus Christ, not only for the solemn admission of the party baptized into the visible Church, but also to be unto him a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, of his ingrafting into Christ, of regeneration, of remission of sins, and of his giving up unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life; which Sacrament is, by Christ's own appointment, to be continued in His Church until the end of the world." I find that many Presbyterians do not know in what strong terms their Confession of Faith speaks of Baptism. If all Presbyterians believed the Westminster Confession, and all Churchmen the Book of Common Prayer, there would not be so many differences in their belief as there are. There would still be vital differences certainly, as on the subject of the Atonement, for example, but the differences between them would be fewer than at present.

I will now place before you some of the blessings of Baptism; and in doing so, I would ask you not to accept anything on my authority alone. I trust, however, that you will not reject anything I put forward because it is new to you, or contrary to your prejudices;

but that you will have the nobleness of the Bereans to go home and search the Scriptures whether those things are so.

I. Baptism is an essential of salvation. In our Catechism, in answer to the question, "How many Sacraments hath Christ ordained in His Church?" it is answered, "Two only, as generally necessary to salvation; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord." We say "two only" in contradistinction to the Church of Rome, which, since the Council of Trent, has taught seven Sacraments; and we say "generally necessary to salvation," that is, wherever they are understood and may be had. Our Church says, "It is certain by God's Word that children which are baptized, dying before they commit actual sin, are undoubtedly saved," but she pronounces nothing on the state of those who have not been brought into the Covenant of God by Baptism. But we do say that Baptism, where it is understood and may be had, is an essential means of salvation. It is written, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." (S. Mark xvi. 16.) "He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." (Titus iii. 5.) "The like figure whereunto even Baptism doth also now save us." (1 S. Peter iii. 21.) "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into

the Kingdom of God." (S. John iii. 5.) In the first passage quoted, our Lord makes both Baptism and Belief conditions of salvation. The Church of Ireland, in the Service for the Public Baptism of Infants, applies the last passage I have quoted to Baptism.

There are some who have brought the false accusation against our Church that she teaches that all who are baptized go to Heaven at the last, whether they are bad or good. Anyone who makes this slanderous assertion without reading our Formularies, is guilty of gross error; and anyone who, having read our Formularies, makes it, is guilty of a wilful lie.

When we speak of Baptism as an essential means of salvation, we do not mean that it is the only essential means. That other means are necessary is evident to anyone who reads the Bible. The Bible says that Baptism is a necessary means of salvation, but it also says that we are saved by grace, that we are saved by faith, that we are saved by hope. "Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts ii. 21.) "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (S. John vi. 53.) Here partaking of the Lord's Supper is said to be an essential means of salvation. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts xvi. 31.) Here trust in Christ is

laid down as an essential of salvation, and you will find in the Bible that living a pure life, and almsgiving, and doing good to others, and forgiving one's enemies, are stated to be necessary conditions of salvation.

And our Book of Common Prayer follows the Bible in teaching that Baptism is not the only essential means and condition of salvation. Turn to the Baptismal Service, and read the words spoken by the Minister when he has baptized a child. "We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign him with the sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner against sin, the world, and the devil, and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." According to this a child by Baptism is enlisted in the army of Christ, and is pledged to fight valiantly under the Captain of his Salvation. Would it not be absurd to teach that when a man is enlisted as a soldier his warfare is accomplished, his victories are won, his decorations received, his term of service ended? We cannot tell whether he will prove a brave soldier, or a faint-hearted one; whether he will turn his back on the foe, or stand in the evil day, a brave soldier of Christ. "Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off." (1 Kings xx. 11.) Training,

in the first place, is necessary for a soldier; and this the Church takes care to impress on the minds of the Sponsors, as you will see in the solemn address delivered to them at the close of the Baptismal Service. In the last words to the Sponsors the Church sets forth Confirmation as another means of grace. Look next to the Catechism, and you will see by it also that the Church does not teach that all who are baptized go to Heaven at the last, whether they are bad or good. Thus, when children come to years of discretion, the absolute necessity is placed before them, if they would attain eternal life, of renouncing the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful desires of the flesh; of believing all the Articles of the Christian Faith; and of keeping God's holy Will and Commandments, and walking in the same all the days of their life. Mark the answer to this question which is taught to every child.

"Dost thou not think that thou art bound to believe and to do as they (*i.e.*, Sponsors) have promised for thee?"

"Yes, verily; and by God's help, so I will. And I heartily thank our Heavenly Father that He hath called me to this state of salvation, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me His grace, that I may continue in the same (*i.e.*, state of salvation) unto my life's end."

If all who are baptized were certain to go to Heaven at the last, no matter whether they were wicked or righteous, would it not be inconsistent with this belief, and extremely absurd, to put into their mouth a prayer that they might continue in a state of salvation unto their life's end? If there were no possibility of their not continuing in a state of salvation, and so forfeiting Heaven, would we teach them to pray against such an impossibility? Our Church also teaches that the Holy Communion is an essential means of salvation; and yet by such a prayer as this in the Communion Service she plainly teaches that we may lose the grace of both Sacraments, and so forfeit Heaven at the last, "And we most humbly beseech Thee, O Heavenly Father, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as Thou hast prepared for us to walk in."

Holy Baptism, then, although an essential means of salvation, is not the only means.

II. In Baptism we are made disciples of Christ, or Christians, "Go ye therefore, and teach (*margin*, 'make disciples or Christians') all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." (S. Matthew xxviii. 19.) How often we wish we had been of those faithful few who were numbered amongst the followers of Christ Jesus on

earth and listened to His words. And yet if we would but realize by faith our privileges, we have all of us been brought by Baptism into the same blessed relationship. We cannot doubt that He Who laid His hands upon the infants and blessed them, still clasps to His bosom those who are presented to Him in that Sacrament which He Himself has appointed. What obligations and blessings this brings with it! Bearing the name of Christ, let us not blaspheme that Holy Name by which we are called; disciples of Jesus, let us show by our conduct that we understand our responsibility. Let us remember the fate of one of His most intimate followers, who lost his relationship to his Master and went to his own place.

III. Another blessing bestowed in Baptism is regeneration. Our text reads, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing" (that is, the font) "of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Our Blessed Lord said to Nicodemus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." (S. John iii. 5.) We have seen that the Church of Ireland applies these words of our Lord to Baptism, and she is right, for the words were never applied to anything else for centuries. "Ye are all," says S. Paul, "the children of God by

faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Gal. iii. 26, 27.) You may hear sometimes at the corners of the streets a man exhorting others to be born again; but apart from the use of the words in the New Testament, such persons might, by the plain meaning of the figure, see the absurdity of the exhortation, for I never heard of anyone who had anything to do with his own birth into the world. And this is just why Holy Scripture uses the figure—to teach us that we do not merit Heaven by our own works, that we have been introduced into the Covenant of Grace, not by the deeds of the law, but through the free mercy of God: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us" (that is, put us into a state of salvation), "by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is through no merit of our own that we are children of God. We might have been born in a heathen country, and never have heard the sound of the Gospel, nor been called by the name of Christ. God of His grace has elected us to this inestimable privilege.

But when we say that regeneration, or the new birth, is a blessing of Baptism, we are liable to be misunderstood; first, because regeneration is by some confounded with conversion; and second, because some

Churchmen in the North of Ireland have adopted an opinion started by John Calvin in the sixteenth century, that if a person be once a child of God, he never can lose the favour of his Heavenly Father.

Take this doctrine of indefectible grace first. It is disproved in the same way that the Papal infallibility is disproved—"That which is new is not true." The argument which people who hold this doctrine put forward is a brief one—"Once a son, always a son." But, we reply, while this affirmation is in a sense true, it is also true that there are obedient and disobedient sons, and some sons of earthly parents have proved to be so disobedient as to be cut off from their inheritance. Holy Scripture states in many places that the same may happen in the Kingdom of Heaven. The doctrine of indefectible grace may be comforting to some, but it has in many instances led to a false sense of security and to profligacy of life. I have myself heard a man say that when he was drunk, which indeed was not seldom, he was as much a child of God and heir of eternal life as when he was in the meeting-house on Sunday. The Bible teaches us that we can receive grace and afterwards lose it. The Parable of the Talents, the Parable of the Pounds, the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant, the Parable of the Ten Virgins, the Parable of the Sower, all go to show this. It is he

that endureth unto the end who shall be saved. The statement, then, "Once a son, always a son," must be supplemented by the other, that we may through impenitence and wilful sin lose our inheritance.

If, therefore, it is possible for us to lose the grace given us in Baptism, what, it may be asked by some, is the use of teaching that in Baptism we are regenerate, or, in other words, adopted into the family of God? I reply, in the first place, that we are bound to teach it since it is in the Bible; and, in the second, that the doctrine will not profit any who are continuing in sin that grace may abound. To those, however, who are penitently seeking God, there is great comfort in the truth that although they have wandered into a far country, they have still a Father to whom they can return. When the Prodigal came to himself he said, "I will arise and go to my *father*." So, then, he had a father still, although he had proved a very unworthy son. If, however, the Prodigal had not returned to his father, his sonship would have profited him nothing; and although we are made the children of God in Baptism, final impenitence will cut us off from the inheritance of our Father in Heaven.

The second misapprehension in regard to regeneration in Baptism is that some confound regeneration with conversion, and so think because we teach that a child

is regenerated in Baptism, he cannot be converted in after life. On the contrary, we teach that it is because through the mercy of God a child is regenerated in Baptism, it is possible for him to convert in after life. There is a very interesting tract by the Rev. John Wesley on this point. And if you read the Epistles, you will find that the exhortations given by the Apostles are founded on this assumption. In the Epistles there are no exhortations to Christians to make one great effort and secure Heaven at a leap, nor yet to wait until they experience conversion, but to begin to serve God at once : they have been called to be Saints, let them therefore walk worthy of their vocation ; as He Who has called them is holy, so let them be holy in all their conduct.

Of all the persons I have heard object to the word regeneration being applied to Baptism I have never found one who could tell me where the word regeneration is found in the Bible, or to what it is there applied. It is evident, therefore, that these people take their opinions, not from the Bible, but from Dissenting tradition. It does seem monstrous that any man will deny that the word regeneration should be applied to Baptism when he has never taken the trouble to search the Scriptures, and see to what the word is there applied. Now, the word regeneration is used only twice in the

Bible. The first place it occurs is S. Matthew xix. 28. "And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." Here the word regeneration is used in the sense of the restoration of all things. The only other place the word occurs is in our text; and here, by the common consent of Christendom, it is applied to Baptism. And since the word is in the New Testament applied to Baptism, our Church would not be Scriptural if she did not so apply it in her Baptismal Service, "Seeing now, dearly beloved brethren, that this child is regenerate, and grafted into the Body of Christ's Church."

But besides the use of the word regeneration in Holy Scripture, the word has a history outside the Bible. (1) The word was in use before the New Testament was written. The Jews were in the habit, before the Advent of Christ, of baptizing all converts from heathenism, both men and women; and they said that such converts were regenerate—they had been children of the heathen world previously, by their Baptism they were born into the family of God, and had a right to the privileges of the sons of God. (2) The word regeneration has also a history since the New Testament was

written. If you search the writings of Christians for sixteen hundred years after Christ you will find the word invariably applied to Baptism. It was not until the seventeenth century that the word regeneration was confounded with conversion; and then, when certain men had perverted the use of the word, and affixed a meaning to it other than that which it had in the Bible and Christian literature, they brought a charge against our Book of Common Prayer of teaching conversion in Baptism, which, of course, is an absurdity. Regeneration is the free favour of God, whereby we are admitted into His family; but many, alas! as they grow up to manhood, prove to be disobedient children—turn their back to God instead of their face—and conversion is the act of these in turning towards God, when the Holy Spirit, which was first given to them in Baptism, convinces them of sin, puts into their hearts new desires, and enables them to bring the same to good effect. In teaching regeneration in Baptism we do not ignore the necessity of conversion for those who, in after life, wander from their Heavenly Father. The doctrine that we are born again in Baptism, instead of giving us any false feeling of security, should rather lead us to reflect that it is by grace we stand, and to praise God for His free favour in bringing us into so intimate a relationship with Himself, and to walk as children of

the light. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." (1 S. John iii. 1.) To belong to a great family, to be the inheritor of a noble name, should prompt to great and noble deeds. We belong to the family of Heaven, we are the children of God; "for as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." How this should influence our every action! How it should nerve us to high and holy work!

IV. Forgiveness of Sins is another blessing of Baptism. In the Nicene Creed we confess, "I believe in one Baptism for the remission of sins." This clause was inserted in the Creed because some persons held that any who had denied the faith and lapsed into heathenism in the time of persecution, should be received again into the Church by re-baptism. According to the Sixth Article, the truth which we here confess is found in Holy Scripture. When the crowd on the Day of Pentecost were convinced of sin, and said to Peter and the rest of the Apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts ii. 38.) Ananias, when sent to Saul of Tarsus, says to him, "And now why tarriest

thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts xxii. 16.)

What sins, then, it may be asked, are forgiven to infants in Baptism? The early Christians taught with one voice that it was original sin, and it would seem reasonable that if we came into the world with the guilt of original sin without any action of ours, we should also receive remission of that sin without our own action; and is it not written, "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"?

Here, again, we must clear the way of a misunderstanding. That we are forgiven our sins in Baptism is liable to be misunderstood by some, on account of a modern heresy which says that when we are forgiven, we are forgiven the sins of the future as well as of the past; that when once we are forgiven, although we may sin afterwards, sin, in our case, ceases to be sin.

You can easily see to what immoral consequences this false doctrine leads. When the heresy was first started, the teachers of it were met with the difficulty that in the Lord's Prayer we are taught to say this petition, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." They, however, got rid of this difficulty in the same way Bishop Colenso got rid of any passage which did not square with his theory, by rejecting it altogether. But if they were

altogether consistent, they must blot out most of the Bible, which speaks of sins and shortcomings, although not habitual or wilful, as pertaining to the greatest saints. "In many things," says S. James, "we offend all." To the same persons, and in the same letter, S. John writes, "Beloved, now are we the sons of God," and, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." Not only does Holy Scripture teach that we need the merit of Christ's death always, but it also speaks of the possibility of backsliding from God, of losing our first love, of forsaking the right path, and having our last end worse than the first.

When we teach, therefore, that Baptism is a means of the forgiveness of sins, we teach also that Christ has left other means in His Church, as Prayer, Absolution, and the Holy Communion.

V. According to the passage we have quoted (Acts of the Apostles ii. 38), the Gift of the Holy Ghost is another blessing vouchsafed to us for Christ's sake in our Baptism. The Baptism of our Blessed Lord introduced a new era into the history of Baptism. Jewish Baptism was for the purpose of introducing persons to the privileges of the Church of God which then was; the Baptism of John was for repentance. The Holy Ghost would seem first to have been given

in Baptism when Christ was baptized. As at Creation the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, bringing order and beauty out of chaos, so at the new creation in Christ Jesus does that same Spirit brood over the waters of Baptism, calming and reducing the discordant elements in our nature, and bringing them into harmony with Heaven. Can you look back to any time when the Holy Spirit did not strive with you? The New Testament teaches that that Spirit was first given you in your Baptism. You will remember when S. Paul came to Ephesus, and found there certain disciples, he asked them, had they received the Holy Ghost since they believed; and on receiving the reply that they had not, he asked, in astonishment, unto what they had been baptized; so that, in the mind of the Apostle, Baptism and the Gift of the Holy Ghost were indissolubly connected.

Here, again, we must guard against a misunderstanding from the side of those who believe that the whole Christian life is begun and ended by a single act of faith, or a single act of conversion. When we teach, according to the New Testament, that the Holy Ghost is given in Christ's Ordinance of Baptism, we teach also that He is given in other means of grace, as in Prayer, in Confirmation, and in the Eucharist.

Now, there are some people who are constantly

throwing contempt on the Services which Christ appointed, while, at the same time, they hold up as necessary to salvation the Services which they themselves have set up; and although they cannot deny that the blessings we have enumerated, and others, are said in the New Testament to be conveyed by Baptism, they yet endeavour to awaken doubts in the minds of weak believers by asking—"Is not such a simple rite as Baptism altogether inadequate to convey so great blessings?" I reply that if we had no direct testimony of Scripture, the very simplicity of the rite would be an argument in its favour, that it is according to the mind of Christ. The greatest results in nature are produced by what seem to the unphilosophic mind trivial causes. A man's signature may be said to be no more than a drop of ink; yet a signature, if it be that of the right person, will give away thousands of pounds, or will reprieve a death sentence. These people who lose no opportunity of showing how much they despise our Lord's Sacrament of Baptism, ask incredulously, "Do you really believe that a few drops of water can make a child a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven?" I reply that apart from the word of Christ and the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is no virtue in the water of Baptism. It would be quite a meritorious view of

the act of Baptism to suppose that the blessing was conveyed by the purity of the water or the sanctity of the officiating Minister. There was no inherent virtue in the waters of Jordan to heal the captain of the host of the king of Syria. There was no inherent virtue in the stick which Elisha the Prophet threw into the river Jordan to make the axe head rise to the surface. There was no inherent virtue in the clay which our Lord put on the eyes of the blind man to make him see. And so it is in Baptism.

When were all these blessings conferred upon us? On most of us when we were helpless infants. There was then no merit of our own, all was by the mercy of God, through the sacrifice on Calvary. Let us, therefore, show our gratitude to God for these inestimable benefits by giving up ourselves to His service, and by doing those things that are well-pleasing in His sight. Baptism, let us never forget, entails on us tremendous responsibilities. As a result of the death of Christ, we have been in Baptism introduced into the Christian Covenant, and every Covenant has two sides. God, by sending His Son to die for us, by bringing us into His Church in Baptism, by making us heirs of the promises, and giving us the influence of the Holy Ghost, has shown us how He wills our salvation. It is our parts and duties to fulfil those conditions of the Covenant which

are on our side; for to each of us there come the words of David to Solomon, "And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off for ever." (1 Chronicles xxviii. 9.)

Confirmation.

V.

Confirmation.

HEBREWS VI. 2.

"And of laying on of hands."

LL ancient Christian Commentators explain "the doctrine of laying on of hands," which follows in this verse "the doctrine of Baptisms," both being principles of the doctrine of Christ, to be Confirmation. Even Grotius and Calvin and other Presbyterian scholars say that the phrase can have no other meaning. I wish to address you this evening on this Apostolic rite. And at the outset, they who have never given any attention to my text and other passages of the New Testament will ask, "What reasons can be urged for Confirmation? What proofs advanced to support it?"

The first reason in behalf of Confirmation is, the Church commands it. At the close of the Baptismal Service the Sponsors in every case receive this charge, "Ye are to take care that this child be brought to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as he can say

the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue, and be further instructed in the Church Catechism set forth for that purpose." If you look also at the rubric at the end of the Confirmation Office, you will find it ordered that every one is to be confirmed before he is admitted to the Holy Communion. With every true Churchman this is enough, for in the Twentieth Article we express the belief that the Church has power to decree rites and ceremonies, so long as she decrees everything for edification, and nothing contrary to God's Word Written. Within these limits the Church has this power from her Founder, "Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in Heaven."

The Presbyterians grant that the Christian Church possesses this power of ordering rites and ceremonies. The Westminster Confession of Faith says, "It belongeth to Synods and Councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience; to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God and government of His Church; to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same; which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for their agreement with the

Word, but also for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word."

The Jewish Church had no such charter from God as the Christian Church has; yet in cases where it decreed rites and ceremonies inside the limits stated, we find those rites and ceremonies receiving the Divine sanction. For example, although the minutest ritual of Judaism was clearly marked out in the Old Testament, the institution and service of the Synagogue were not even mentioned. The Synagogue was decreed by the Jewish Church after the captivity in Babylon. It was not commanded by God; yet Christ sanctioned it, by going to it and joining in its services. The Feast of the Dedication, again, had no Divine foundation. It was instituted by the Jews to commemorate the cleansing of the Temple after its pollution by Antiochus. Yet Christ set His seal on it by attending it just as religiously as He did the Feast of the Passover. Jewish Baptism was not commanded by God; yet Christ approved of it by adopting it as the initiation into His New Covenant. The Baptism of John had no Divine authority to support it. It was a Baptism for repentance; yet to it Christ submitted, although having no sins to repent of, saying, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Since, then, the Church

orders Confirmation, and since it is not contrary to God's Word and is for edification, this is reason enough for every good Christian, as well as for every good Churchman.

Another reason in behalf of Confirmation is this :— The Christian Church has practised it from the beginning. It must therefore have had the approval of the Apostles ; and, indeed, been instituted by them. Tertullian (A.D. 200), for example, writes :—" After Baptism succeeds laying on of hands, by benediction, calling for and invoking the Holy Spirit." S. Cyprian (A.D. 250), speaking of the Confirmation of the Samaritans recorded in Acts viii., says :—" The same custom is now observed amongst us, that they who are baptized in the Church may be presented to the Governors of it, that by our prayers and imposition of hands they may obtain the Holy Ghost, and be perfected with the seal of Christ." S. Jerome (A.D. 390) writes :—" Are you ignorant that now this is the custom of the Churches upon those who have been baptized, afterwards to lay hands, and thus invoke the Holy Spirit? Do you ask where it is written? In the Acts of the Apostles. Although, if there were no authority of Scripture for it, the consent of the whole world in this particular has the force of a command." S. Augustine (A.D. 398) writes :—" The Apostles prayed that the Holy Spirit would come upon

those on whom they laid their hands. They themselves did not give Him. Which custom, after their example, deriving it from them, the Church observes to this day." S. Ambrose (A.D. 370), commenting on our text, says :—" It means the imposition of hands, by which the Holy Spirit is supposed to be received ; which, after Baptism, is wont to be done by the Chief Priests, for the confirmation of men in the unity of the Church of Christ."

We have thus the testimony of Christian writers from the earliest times, extending down through the centuries, that Confirmation was practised everywhere by the Church of Christ, that it had been practised always, and that it had been derived from the Apostles.

Confirmation at the time of the Reformation was practised by all branches of the Christian Church. At the Reformation Luther retained it in the Reformed Church of Germany ; and the following is the opinion of John Calvin on the matter :—" It was an ancient custom in the Church for the children of Christians, after they were come to years of discretion, to be presented to the Bishop, in order to fulfil that duty which was required of adults who offered themselves to baptism. For such persons were placed among the catechumens, till, being duly instructed in the mysteries of Christianity, they were enabled to make a confession of their faith

before the Bishop and all the people. Therefore, those who had been baptized in their infancy, because they had not then made such a confession of faith before the Church, at the close of childhood, or the commencement of adolescence, were again presented by their parents, and were examined by the Bishop according to the form of the Catechism which was then in common use. That this exercise, which deserved to be regarded as solemn and sacred, might have the greater dignity and reverence, they also practised the ceremony of imposition of hands. Thus the youth, after having given satisfaction respecting his faith, was dismissed with a solemn benediction." "Such imposition of hands, therefore, as is simply connected with benediction, I highly approve, and wish it were now restored to its primitive use, uncorrupted by superstition."

But we have also most certain warrants for Confirmation from Holy Scripture. We have already seen that the Christian Fathers interpret our text of Confirmation, and we have the confession of the most learned Presbyterian Commentators that it can mean nothing else. Besides the laying on of hands being reckoned among the first principles of the doctrine of Christ, we have instances in the New Testament of the rite being performed. In Acts viii. you may read how Philip, one of the Deacons, went down to Samaria and preached

Christ. As a result of his preaching, many were turned to the faith and received into the Church by Baptism. And when the Apostles at Jerusalem heard of this, they sent two of their own number, S. Peter and S. John, who came to Samaria, and praying for the baptized, laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost. Here is an instance of Confirmation, and that by Bishops, for our Lord left His Apostles to be the rulers and ordainers in the Church.

You have another instance in Acts xix. S. Paul comes to Ephesus, and finding there certain professed disciples, asks them, "Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?" They reply that they had not been taught to look for any special outpouring of the Spirit. S. Paul, in astonishment, enquires what kind of Baptism they had received. They answer, "Unto John's Baptism." John's Baptism was for repentance, Christ's Baptism is for the remission of sins. S. Paul baptizes them with Christian Baptism. Afterwards he lays his hands upon them, and the Holy Ghost comes upon them.

The only question, then, after this, which can come to any believer, is this—We find in one instance that the laying on of the Apostles' hands was followed by the miraculous gifts of the Spirit: was the Church, therefore, justified in continuing this rite when these miraculous gifts ceased? It is, I think, a completely

satisfactory answer, to anyone desirous of knowing the truth, that those who were taught by the Apostles did so continue it, and that it has existed in the Christian Church ever since. Moreover, it would be contrary to the whole teaching of the New Testament to suppose that because the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit have ceased, the ordinary and more necessary have ceased also. The miraculous gifts are now no longer essential, the ordinary are. Besides, S. Paul has shown us that of the two the ordinary gifts are by far the more precious. The graces of the Spirit which are exhibited in charity are, according to the Apostle, the more excellent way.

Further, if we allowed this argument, that because the miraculous gifts of the Spirit have ceased to accompany Confirmation we should discontinue it, to be consistent we must abolish all means of grace, for those gifts sometimes accompanied preaching and public worship. "Does any man," asks S. Augustine, "now expect to hear them speak with new tongues who receive imposition of hands, as a means to convey the Holy Spirit? Or when we laid our hands on these infants, did any of you expect that they should speak with tongues? And when they did not, were any of you so perverse in heart as to say they had not received the Holy Ghost?"

But it has been argued that because some do not

show signs of grace received in Confirmation, therefore they have received none. Did Judas never receive any privileges or grace, because he betrayed his Lord? In the Parable of the Sower, the seed was sown on all sorts of ground, and all the seed was good. Only that sown on one sort of ground brought forth fruit to perfection. No means of grace will act as a charm, and make a man good in spite of himself. Therefore let those who intend to present themselves for Confirmation be determined to lead a pure and holy life, by the mercy and strength of God through Christ. If they do, I have no doubt they will receive the full blessing of the Service, even the gift of the Holy Ghost and His grace to enable them to live holy lives. I would counsel them to spend as much time as possible between this and their Confirmation in prayer and the reading of God's Word, and to cultivate a spirit of expectation that at their Confirmation God will pour out upon them the abundance of His grace, and supply them with strength to fight in His name against sin, the world, and the devil.

To any who may be timid about presenting themselves for Confirmation, lest afterwards they might prove unfaithful, I would say, Take care. The second death is the portion of the fearful and unbelieving, as well as of the murderer and adulterer. Even taking

into account all your own doubts and fears, if you are sincere in coming forward, you only run the risk of proving unfaithful afterwards; whereas by staying away you become unfaithful already; for until you are confirmed you cannot be a partaker of the Holy Communion. Christ commands you to partake of His Sacrament, and can you expect to be saved if you wilfully break His command? But perhaps someone says, "I certainly do intend being confirmed, and becoming a constant communicant, but not just yet." Is it any wilful sin makes you delay? I beseech you, as you value your eternal happiness, resolve with God's help to renounce it ere you leave this church. Is it merely spiritual sloth causes you to procrastinate? Then I ask, Have you in particular received any lease of your life? Have you received any assurance that you will live until another Confirmation? While you are deliberating and waiting, the death-angel may be approaching to cut you off from the means of grace, and end your probation. Have I any personal end to gain by thus exhorting you? Is it not simply that I am anxious about your souls? And One standing among you is more anxious than I possibly could be, One Who in submitting to be baptized exhorts you, "Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness."

The Holy Communion.

VI.

The Holy Communion.

1 Corinthians x. 16, 17.

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread."

FREDERICK THE GREAT despised the literature of his native country, and lost no opportunity of showing his preference for the French language, literature, and philosophy. He cultivated Voltaire, and carried on a flirtation with free-thought. One day he had a Lutheran Clergyman dining with him, and, thinking to confound him before the guests, he asked him to give some proof of the genuineness and truth of the Bible. He did not wish, he said, to be troubled with a long argument; if the Bible were true, some reason stated briefly could be given in favour of it. The Clergyman at once replied, "The Jews." If the existence of the Jews tells in favour of the Bible, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper tells in favour of the New Testament. If the existence

of the Jews as a people separate from all the nations of the earth, although scattered among the nations, cannot be accounted for except by Bible history, the Sacrament of Holy Communion cannot be accounted for except by Gospel history. Over three thousand years ago it was foretold, "This people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations," and we see it so to this day. More than eighteen hundred years ago it was said, "This do in remembrance of Me," and in our own day we see the Act done. Let any who have doubts in regard to the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ weigh this remarkable fact, that through all the chequered history of the Christian Church, through persecutions and fire and sword, through prosperity and adversity, this Sacred Rite has ever been performed since the command was given in the upper room. Old dynasties have passed away, new nations have sprung up, have become old and effete, and been succeeded by others, which in their turn have passed away: and yet this Act still lives on. Through all the centuries it yet survives, and while Christians have differed in language, in customs, in colour, all have agreed in doing this Act.

This holy Sacrament is called by various names. In our Prayer Book it is called "the Lord's Supper," "the Communion," "the Sacrament of the Eucharist." (See

original Latin of Article XXVIII.) In the New Testament it is referred to as "the Breaking of Bread" (Acts ii. 42, 46; xx. 7), as the "Communion" (1 Cor. x. 16), as "the Lord's Supper" (1 Cor. xi. 20), and, probably, in 1 Cor. xiv. 16 as the "Eucharist" or "Thanksgiving." In the writings of the early Christians, the title of the Holy Communion is given it by Cyril of Jerusalem; the Lord's Supper, by Cyprian; the Eucharist, by Ignatius, Irenæus, Justin Martyr, Cyril of Jerusalem, Clement of Alexandria; the Oblation, by Clement of Rome, Irenæus, Justin Martyr; the Sacrament, by Tertullian, Cyprian, Fulgentius; the Sacrifice, by Justin Martyr, Cyprian, Chrysostom; the Commemoration, by Justin Martyr, Origen, Eusebius; the Passover, by Origen, Hilary, Jerome. By whatever names called, the Act of Worship is the same, and in its celebration there are in all the earliest Liturgies three parts—1, The rehearsal of Christ's words spoken at the institution of the Sacrament; 2, The oblation or offering of the elements of bread and wine to God as a memorial of the death of Christ; 3, Prayer for the sanctifying influence of the Holy Ghost to make the elements in spirit and power what they outwardly represent—the body and blood of Christ.

The Anglican Church in her Formularies applies the title of Sacrament to the Holy Communion and

to Baptism. There are some now-a-days who profess to be members of the Anglican Church, and yet talk about "the Seven Sacraments." I do not understand how they can do so, and retain any sense of honour. To anyone reading the Book of Common Prayer honestly there can be no doubt as to the number of solemn Services to which our Church applies the name of Sacrament. The *sacramentum* was the oath which the Roman soldier took on entering the army to be faithful to the Empire, and not to turn his back on the foe. According to its derivation, the word might be applied to any religious Service, or even to any solemn contract. But we members of the Anglican Church are not at liberty so to apply it, as the Church to which we owe allegiance has defined the use of the word, has named the Services to which we are to apply the word, and, that there may be no mistake on the matter, has named certain other Services to which the word must not be applied. Our Catechism defines a Sacrament thus—(1) "An outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us, (2) ordained by Christ Himself, (3) as a means whereby we receive the same, (4) and a pledge to assure us thereof." We Churchmen have no right, as long as we continue in the Anglican Church, to exercise our private judgment and apply the title of Sacrament to anything which does not

answer to the four conditions in this definition. Of those other five things included in the number of Sacraments by those who talk about "the Seven Sacraments," only three are recognized by our Church as Religious Ceremonies, and have Services provided for their performance—Confirmation, Matrimony, and Ordination, and each of these fails to answer in all points our Church's definition of a Sacrament. Confirmation does not fulfil the first condition, it has no outward and visible sign, like the water in Baptism and the bread and wine in the Eucharist. Matrimony does not fulfil a single condition of our Church's definition. We could hardly say that the ring in marriage is "an outward and visible sign"; and I know not what the "inward and spiritual grace given" in marriage may be, except we fall back on the explanation of some married people who say that there is a discipline in married life which can be gained by no other means. Of Ordination to the sacred Office of the Ministry, while we know that it was instituted by Christ Himself, and does, as His ordinance, convey grace to those who worthily present themselves, yet it does not answer to the Church's definition of a Sacrament, not having "an outward and visible sign." Our Catechism names the two Religious Ceremonies which we are to call Sacraments,

and the Twenty-fifth Article does the same. "There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. These five, commonly called Sacraments, that is to say, Confirmation, Penance, Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel, being such as have grown partly of the corrupt following of the Apostles, partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not like nature of Sacraments with Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for that they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God." And yet in spite of such plain words there are some professing to be members of the Anglican Church who speak of "the Seven Sacraments." If, however, we are going to apply the word Sacrament, according to its derivation, to any religious Service or solemn contract, why stop at "seven"? Perhaps the reason may be found in the following Canon of the Council of Trent:—"If any man shall say that the Sacraments of the new law were not all instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, or that they are more or fewer in number than seven—namely, Baptism, Confirmation, the Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony—or that any of these seven is not truly and properly a Sacrament, let him be accursed." Anyone comparing this with

what I have quoted from our Formularies can see whether those gentlemen who teach Seven Sacraments adhere to the Roman Church or to the Anglican.

The doctrine of the Roman Church touching the Sacrament of the Eucharist is Transubstantiation; that is, not that the bread and wine are changed into the body and blood of Christ, but that the *substance* of them is changed. Transubstantiation has no more solid foundation than in metaphysics, and the metaphysical idea on which it rests has been exploded long ago—that there is a something in every material thing called substance, distinct from its accidents of smell, taste, colour, and this substance it is which is changed into the body and blood of Christ. Transubstantiation was not the doctrine of the Primitive Church; and when it was first broached was earnestly opposed by several Roman Catholic theologians. It was, however, promulgated as the doctrine of the Romish Church at the Council of the Lateran in 1215; and reaffirmed by the Council of Trent in 1551, and in the Creed of Pope Pius IV., 1563.

The doctrine of the Protestant Church in Germany is Consubstantiation; that is, that with the consecrated elements the body and blood of Christ are received by the communicants.

It is a pity these terms ever were invented. Apart from their containing what we believe to be false ideas

of the Holy Sacrament, they are an attempt to explain what cannot be explained. The early Christians undoubtedly held that in the Eucharist there was a special presence of Christ; but they did not attempt to explain how He was present.

The Real Spiritual Presence of Christ in the Holy Communion is the doctrine of the Anglican Church. A spiritual presence is as real a presence as a bodily presence.

On the nature of the Eucharistic Service there have always been two schools of Theology in the Anglican Church; one holding that in the Lord's Supper there is a sacrificial idea; the other that it is a feast upon a sacrifice. Great names can be quoted on both sides; on the side of the latter Cudworth, Warburton, Waterland; on the side of the former Andrewes, Bramhall, Bull, Beveridge, Cosin, Comber, Hooker, Hickes, Johnson, Jolly, Jewell, Mede, Potter, Patrick, Thorndike.

If you should ever read with unbiassed mind the works of these men you will find that there is much to be said on both sides. As the sacrificial aspect of the Lord's Supper is perhaps that which is least understood except among theologians, it will not be lost time if I say something about it. First, I would say that a person who holds that the Commuuion is a feast upon a sacrifice might have a higher opinion of it than a

person who holds it to be a sacrifice. Again, I should be withholding the truth from you if I did not state that the men who hold the latter opinion are one and all stout opponents of the Romish doctrine of Transubstantiation. They do not believe that in the Eucharist Christ is offered again as a sacrifice for sin, but that in it an oblation or offering is made to God the Father by which the virtue of the One Sacrifice on Calvary is pleaded before Him. To show you that they of this opinion do not teach that the Holy Communion is in any sense a repetition or imitation of the Sacrifice of Christ on the Cross, I will quote the words of one who held this opinion:—"There is but One Priest Who, in His own right, can approach God; there is but One Mediator Who can plead His own goodness, even the Lord Jesus Christ; and so there is but One propitiatory and expiatory Sacrifice; even 'the one full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction,' once made upon the Cross, when the Lamb of God was offered for the sins of the whole world. There never has been, there never will be any other. Except for this one and only Atonement, nothing we could say, think, or do would be acceptable to God; but for this we should all remain as we were born, an accursed race.

"But though this be most true, yet with respect to those who rely on the intercession of that One great

Priest, and, by an ever-present faith, plead and apply to their souls the merits of that One expiatory Sacrifice, the Spirit teaches us that they render unto God acceptable service. God, for Christ's sake, will accept a service at their hands; in other words, He will permit them to stand in a favourable relation to Him, Whom, except for Christ, they could not approach. And this gives us the idea of a sacrifice. For a sacrifice is something presented to God, in behalf of man, by persons Divinely appointed to 'offer gifts unto the Lord.' In this sense . . . the Eucharist is a Commemorative Sacrifice." *(Dean Hook.)*

Whether these men be right in their conclusions or no, the idea here put forward of sacrifice is Scriptural. It would be altogether unscriptural to suppose that the idea of sacrifice necessarily involves shedding of blood or the death of a victim; there were probably in the Jewish Church more sacrifices of other things, as "meat offerings" and "drink offerings," than of slain animals. Again, it should be borne in mind that no kind of sacrifice in the Jewish Church was propitiatory; no, not even the animal sacrificed according to the command of God could atone for sin. Nor is there any idea of atonement underlying the Holy Communion, but it is believed that as the Jewish offerings pointed forward to the one propitiatory offer-

ing on the Cross, so the Holy Communion points back to it; and that as in all our prayers we plead the merits of Christ by asking in His name, so in this Service of the Eucharist we plead those merits also, but in a more eminent degree, as this is the Service which Christ instituted in connection with His death and as a Memorial of it. So that according to this there is a twofold aspect of the Lord's Supper—one towards God, the other towards man; we offer to God the oblations of bread and wine, according to Christ's institution, pleading by these symbols the death of His Only-begotten Son, and then we receive them back from Him to convey to us, not according to any carnal idea, but spiritually, and yet effectually, the body and blood of Christ. Whatever blessing we receive by the faithful reception of the consecrated symbols, it does not come from anything inherent in them, nor yet from any virtue in the officiating priest, but from the Word of Christ attaching to those symbols, and by virtue of His death on Calvary.

If you should ask me, does this view of the Holy Communion involve the idea of a sacrificing Ministry, I should honestly reply, Yes and No—Yes in the Biblical sense, No in the popular sense; and I should as honestly add that the right and duty of offering up sacrifices to God does not pertain exclusively to the

Clergy; in a certain sense all good Christians are priests to offer sacrifice to God, both material and spiritual. It is written, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 S. Peter ii. 5.) "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God," writes S. Paul to the Romans, "that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." (Romans xii. 1.) It is written again:—"To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Hebrews xiii. 16.) And again it is written:—"I have all and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God." (Philippians iv. 18.) Here doing good to others is called a sacrifice, as also devoting of our substance to God, and the giving of alms, and these last are material sacrifices. Sacrifices in the Bible, however, are not always material. Contrition of heart is called a sacrifice:—"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Psalm li. 17.) Thanksgiving is called a sacrifice:—"By Him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the

fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name." (Hebrews xiii. 15.) Indeed, no one who follows out this subject in God's Word can deny that anything which we offer to God is a sacrifice.

Now if you read our Communion Service, you will find that all these Scriptural ideas of sacrifice are included in it: We present and offer to God through the merits of His Son (1) our Alms, (2) the Oblations of Bread and Wine, (3) our Confession of Repentance, (4) our praise and thanksgiving, (5) ourselves, our souls and bodies.

There is no other Service besides the Eucharist in which all these sacrificial acts are combined. It is pre-eminently the Christian Service, the chief Act of Christian Worship. No other Service is connected as it is with the propitiation which Christ offered on the Cross for the sins of the world. Of no other kind of Worship is it said, as it is in our text, that it is a communicating to us of the body and blood of Christ. He who refuses to join in this Service wilfully breaks a distinct command of Christ, and thereby counts himself unworthy of eternal life. And it is written, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, ye have no life in you." (S. John vi. 53.)

Second Series.

Fasting.

I.

Fasting.

S. Matthew vi. 16, 17, 18.

"Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."

MAN is a creature of prejudice. With the majority prejudice rules the will, instead of the will ruling prejudice; not reason nor judgment causes them to act in a certain way, or come to a certain conclusion, but prejudice. This is more or less the case, indeed, with everyone. The words spoken by one man convince us; the same words, if spoken by another, would have no influence on us whatever. We often derive as much pleasure from the singer as from the song. We think a name pretty because we know someone amiable and gifted who owns it; or it sounds to us like an instrument out of tune because someone ungentle, ignoble, who laid claim to it, has crossed our path. There are meadows not

greener than other meadows; forests not deeper than other forests; seas not bluer than other seas; which are ever to us most beautiful, because of pleasant converse and companionship there enjoyed; and there are other spots of earth, not less fair than these, which we must always regard with abhorrence because stained with some sin or the life-blood shed through sorrow. Prejudice rules more or less over us all; and in no subject does it exercise a stronger sway over us than that of fasting, to which, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, I would direct your attention this evening. I remember in one parish in which I laboured proposing to a parishioner, who was a pillar of the church, that I should preach on this subject; and he strongly advised me to let it alone. This would have caused no surprise, if the gentleman in question had been a worldly man or an unbeliever; but he believed that he received the Bible as the Word of God, and was, as far as his knowledge went, a pious man. In such a case it is either prejudice or ignorance of God's Word which bears sway.

What is the Preacher's duty in the face of prejudice on any particular question? Is he to follow the advice of my friend and ignore the subject, even when it is brought under the notice of the congregation in some portion of Holy Scripture read in the Service for the

Day? is he to choose the praise of men rather than that of God, and explain the subject away? or is he to declare to the people committed to his charge "all the counsel of God"? One would suppose there would be little doubt as to how men should act whose office it is to "speak the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth." Yet I have heard a Clergyman say, when explaining a certain doctrine, "I dared not teach this doctrine when I first came to town, but now I can do so," which seems equal to saying that the Preacher is to occupy the position not of Teacher, but of taught; that he is to wait until his congregation have found out from the Bible the truth on any subject, and that then he is to preach it to them, but not until then. Of course, such an one would have many reasons to put forward to show that his course was the wise one, for even cowards have something to say for themselves, and are ready to prove that in their case

"running
Is nothing but a valorous kind of cunning."

But it seems to me that while we should not forget that there is such a thing as casting pearls before swine, we should as Teachers speak according to the Oracles of God, whether the people will hear or forbear. It is a significant fact, much to be meditated on, that

our Saviour spoke words which He must have known would create prejudice against Him, taught truths which He knew would be rejected by His hearers. In spite of this, He yet uttered those words and proclaimed those truths. And it is not the Clergy alone who are to take Him as their example in this. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth." (S. John xviii. 37.) To the Preacher who is true to his office, true to his parishioners, true to his God, the path is plain. And I am persuaded that if a Clergyman will preach truths against which there exists a prejudice, without using theological terminology, but proving them from the Bible, many in every congregation will search the Scriptures to see if those things be so, and will believe; and even they who will neither receive his teaching nor search the Scriptures will yet respect him, while they will despise a trimmer in their heart, although they may speak him fair to his face.

It may not be possible for some of us to lay aside all prejudice on this matter of Fasting; nevertheless, let us lay aside as much of it as we can.

And I do not stake the case for Fasting on what seems to have been the custom in nearly all religions, although this is an argument which would have much weight with all people capable of reasoning. The idea

of Fasting, like the idea of Sacrifice, seems to have been universal in the early ages of the world. And as we argue from this that the doctrine of Sacrifice must have been taught to man at the first, so also we argue in regard to Fasting.

I do not, however, rest the case on the custom of Jews, and Christians, and Heathen, but proceed at once to ask, What saith the Scripture?

We find in the Bible that Fasting was practised in every Dispensation; nay, further, that it was in use anterior to the Fall. It was disloyalty to the duty of fasting which

> "Brought Death into the world, and all our woe,
> With loss of Eden."

Fasting is total abstinence from food, or abstinence from enticing food; and in the second sense Fasting existed in the Garden of Eden. The first command in the whole Bible is a command to fast; the first sin recorded in the Bible is a refusal to fast. "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." (Genesis ii. 16, 17.) "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that

it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her : and he did eat." (Genesis iii. 6.)

The chief Fast among the Jews, ordered directly by God, was on the Great Day of Atonement. In Leviticus xvi. we read that this Fast was to be observed on the tenth day of the seventh month. The Rev. Patrick Fairbairn, a Presbyterian Divine, writes of this Fast :—" Being a day specially set apart for calling sins to remembrance, it was also a day meet for afflicting their souls ; it became them, then, to cease from the gratification of fleshly desire, 'not doing their own works or finding their own pleasure,' and with fitting exercises of humiliation and godly sorrow, to recall to mind the backslidings and transgressions with which they had dishonoured the living God. . . . A spare diet, the absence of all luxuries, a marked reserve in regard to every kind of fleshly pleasure or indulgence, even a partial abstinence from food, would naturally be felt by the pious portion of the community to be proper accompaniments of the Service. But serious and heartfelt sorrow for sin would still be regarded as the chief thing."

Besides the Fast on the Day of Atonement, the Prophet Zechariah (viii. 19) refers to other Jewish

Fasts—in the fourth month, the fifth month, and the tenth month.

In addition to these Stated Fasts in the ancient Church of God, there were also National Fasts, ordered on special occasions by Judges and Prophets, under the authority of Jehovah, on account of some national sin, to avert some threatened calamity, or to procure some special blessing. A General Fast of this kind is described in the Book of Judges, when the children of Israel were smitten by the Benjamites, whom they wished to punish for not delivering up certain noted criminals:—"Then all the children of Israel, and all the people, went up, and came unto the house of God, and wept, and sat there before the Lord, and fasted that day until even, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord." (Judges xx. 26.)

We have a record of another such Fast in 1 Samuel vii. 6—"And they gathered together to Mizpeh, and drew water, and poured it out before the Lord, and fasted on that day, and said there, We have sinned against the Lord."

Again, Jehoshaphat when sore pressed by the Moabites and Ammonites "proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah." (2 Chronicles xx. 3.)

When Ezra was returning with a number of Israelites from Babylon to the Promised Land, he commanded

all those who were with him to fast, that God might grant them a prosperous journey. (Ezra viii. 21-23.)

When Ahasuerus signed the decree to exterminate the Israelites, "there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing; and many lay in sackcloth and ashes." (Esther iv. 3.) And when Esther was about to petition the king to spare her people, she sent this message to Mordecai—"Go, gather together all the Jews that are in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day; I also and my maidens will fast likewise." (Esther iv. 16.)

The Prophet Joel calls the whole nation of Israel, infants and old men, to a General Fast. "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly; gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach." (Joel ii. 15-17.)

Besides these National Fasts, we learn from Holy Scripture that pious persons, in every age of the world, were in the habit of fasting when repenting of their sins, drawing near to God, or beseeching Him for any

special favour. Thus David fasted when he mourned over his great sin; and when he besought God to spare the life of his child. (2 Samuel xii. 16; Psalm xxxv. 13; lxix. 10.) On two occasions, at least, Moses fasted for forty days—when He ascended Mount Sinai to receive the Law; and when he returned and found the people fallen into idolatry. (Deuteronomy ix. 9 and 18.) Elijah also fasted for a like space of time. (1 Kings xix. 8.) Nehemiah, too, when he heard that his countrymen were in great affliction, that the wall of Jerusalem was broken down, and the gates thereof burned with fire, "sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of Heaven." (Nehemiah i. 4.)

In the Jewish Church, therefore, there were Public Fasts, some of which were ordained directly by God, some by Judges and Prophets acting under authority from God, and Private Fasts observed by pious men and women.

Having seen what were the laws and pious customs of God's people under other Dispensations, we come now to enquire what they are under the present. And here the question at once comes before us—Fasting was commanded in the Old Testament: is it abrogated in the New? Now, just as Fasting is one of the first subjects which meet us in the Old Testament, so also

is it in the New. Instead of finding any abrogation of Fasting in the New Testament, we find the pious custom continued. It would seem to an unprejudiced mind that the example of our Blessed Lord in this matter should count for much with all sincere Christians, and so it always has done. Opening the New Testament, we read in the Gospel according to S. Matthew (iv. 1-11) of Christ's Fast of forty days. Was it necessary for Him to fast Whose were "the cattle upon a thousand hills," and Who could have commanded the stones in the wilderness to become loaves? Why did He fast? Why, but to set an example to His followers in every succeeding age, to teach them that by means of Fasting they may successfully meet all forms of temptation—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life"? So the early Christians understood, for they observed the Fast of Lent in memory of Christ's Fast in the Wilderness. The Church of Rome had no more to do with instituting Lent than she had with instituting the Christian Sabbath.

And we have not only our Lord's example, but His teaching. In our text He gives explicit directions as to how men are to fast. "Ah! but," says one, "He does not command Fasting." No, we reply, neither does He command almsgiving nor prayer, but He does assume almsgiving, and fasting, and prayer, and tells

us how they are to be performed. He speaks of the three duties in precisely the same words — "When thou doest alms," "When thou prayest," "When thou fastest." (S. Matthew vi. 3, 5, 17.) He does not say, "*If* thou fastest," but, "*When* thou fastest," assuming that the duty certainly will be done.

How stands the case, then? Christ fasted in the days of His flesh, and directed His followers how they were to fast; and I would most earnestly caution those who endeavour to put aside our Saviour's example and teaching by saying, "Christ does not command Fasting," that there is such a thing as "wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction."

In addition to our Lord's teaching in His Sermon on the Mount, we have also a declaration of His on Fasting on another occasion. When He was asked why the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees fasted often and His disciples did not fast, He replied that as long as He was with His disciples it was a time of joy, and it would, therefore, be out of place for them to fast; but He says the time will come when He shall be taken away from them, "and then shall they fast." (S. Matthew ix. 14, 15.) Did the disciples do so? To answer the question we have only to turn to the Acts of the Apostles and to the Epistles. In Acts xiii. 2 we read that while the Christians of Antioch

were fasting, "the Holy Ghost said, Separate Me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them"—that is, missionary work in Asia Minor. "And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (v. 3). In Acts xiv. 23 we read that S. Paul and S. Barnabas on this missionary journey, when they had ordained Presbyters in every Church, "and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord." In 2 Corinthians vi. 5 and xi. 27 S. Paul speaks of his frequent fastings, and that by fastings he meant voluntary abstinence from food is evident from the fact that in the same sentence he mentions both "hunger" and "fastings."

But why delay proving a matter about which there has never been a doubt in the Christian Church from the beginning—a means of grace used by Christ and His Apostles, and by pious persons in every Dispensation.

There is a method, however, of getting rid of the duty of Fasting; a method, I should state, which is not adopted by attentive readers of the Bible, nor by pious people in any party, but by those persons who would fain get to Heaven apart from that self-denial without which Christ said no man could be His disciple. "Certainly," say these people, "Fasting is inculcated in the New Testament; but by Fasting is not meant total abstinence from food, nor abstinence from pleasant

food, but from sin." I ask all men of common sense to apply this explanation to the Gospel History. It will mean that our Lord, when He fasted forty days and forty nights, did not abstain from food, but from sin; although the Bible does tell us that "in those days He did eat nothing." (S. Luke iv. 2.) According to this mode of interpretation our text will mean that when a man abstains from sin, he is to do so in secret. According to this also, when Christ was asked why the disciples of the Baptist fasted and His disciples did not, we shall understand that the question meant why did S. John's disciples abstain from sin and the disciples of Christ not abstain from sin. And according to this method of explaining away Fasting we must understand our Lord's answer to be that His disciples could not abstain from sin as long as He was with them, but the days would come when He would be no longer with them, and then they should abstain from sin in those days. The person who does not see the absurdity of this way of getting free from the obligation of Fasting must be either impious or insane.

There is another method by which some men think they may excuse themselves from Fasting:—"Roman Catholics fast. Fasting is popish." But for such an objection as this one would not suppose it necessary to say that to those who wish to know the truth, and walk

in the light, it matters not what Roman Catholics do: the only question is, What saith the Scripture?

Others, again, object to Fasting, saying contemptuously, "That is what High-Churchmen preach, but do not practise." I have heard this objection so often that I have taken the trouble of searching the works of our Evangelical Divines; and the result is that I find no second opinion on this question held by any scholar of any party, whether "High," "Low," or "Broad." Some may preach the doctrine more than others; but all are agreed as to its obligation. It is related of Mr. Venn, one of the Founders of the Church Missionary Society, that when a pious servant of his committed a sin he shut himself up in his room for a whole day, and with fasting and prayer besought God to forgive. More than this: I find that Biblical scholars belonging to the Presbyterian and Methodist persuasions insist on the obligation of Fasting equally with Churchmen. I should like to read you an extract or two from the chapter on "Public Solemn Fasting" in the Presbyterian "Directory for the Public Worship of God." This Directory was drawn up by the Westminster Divines, and approved by the General Assembly. "When some great and notable judgments are either inflicted upon a people, or apparently imminent, or by some extraordinary provocations notoriously deserved;

as also when some special blessing is to be sought and obtained, public solemn Fasting (which is to continue the whole day) is a duty that God expecteth from that nation or people.

"A religious fast requires total abstinence, not only from all food (unless bodily weakness do manifestly disable from holding out till the fast be ended, in which case somewhat may be taken, yet very sparingly, to support nature, when ready to faint), but also from all worldly labour, discourses, and thoughts, and from all bodily delights, and such-like (although at other times lawful), etc.

"Besides solemn and general fasts enjoined by authority, we judge that, at other times, congregations may keep days of Fasting, as Divine Providence shall administer unto them special occasion, and also that families may do the same, so be it not on days wherein the congregation to which they do belong is to meet for Fasting, or other public duties of worship."

In obedience to "The Directory," Presbyterian congregations in Ulster have their solemn public Fast-days. I do not know if they follow its rules and the custom of their pious forefathers by abstaining wholly or in part from food on such days, but I do know certain districts where on the Fast-day of any particular congregation no work is done on farms, except what is

absolutely necessary, as on Sunday, and all shops belonging to that congregation are closed.

I read a paper, by the way, lately, by "A.K.H.B.," on the subject of Fasting. I always enjoy the writings of this genial essayist, but I thought the paper in question had a quiet humour all its own. In it Mr. Boyd writes, "I have known, years ago, of good people who on a Fast-day did go without food till sunset, but I do not believe that in this part of Scotland there are any such now." He then asks are the people of the present generation right in abandoning Fasting, and he answers, "Quite right." Then, at the close of the essay, he writes, "But if we fast at all, it shall be as my text (S. Matthew vi. 16-18) shows us how, secretly and unostentatiously," etc. This reminds me of the German Act of Parliament against Duelling. The first section of the Act forbids duels; the second section states, But if a duel is to be fought, the following conditions are to be observed!

I fear that in the present generation there is a falling away from God in the practice of Fasting, alike among Churchmen and Nonconformists. Many "Evangelicals" of the last generation observed every Friday as a Fast-day: do they who call themselves by the name in the present generation do so?

When shall we fast? This question is easily answered,

for such of us as are loyal Churchmen; and as we Ulstermen pride ourselves on loyalty to the State, I trust we excel no less in the virtue of loyalty to the Church. The revised Prayer Book of the Church of Ireland has appointed these "Days of Fasting, or Abstinence":— The Lenten Fast of forty days, in which the Sundays are not counted, in remembrance of our Lord's Fast in the Wilderness; the Rogation Days, in imitation of those holy men who fasted when they asked God for any special gift; the Ember Days, before Ordinations, after the example of the Apostles, who fasted when they were about to ordain to the Office of the Ministry; and Friday in each week, in memory of the Death and Passion of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How shall we fast? It is difficult, and also undesirable, to make rules. What would constitute fasting to one person would be no self-denial to another. If certain kinds of food are forbidden, many will on Days of Fasting omit these foods, but eat others which they like better. I have known Roman Catholics, for instance, who would not eat meat on a Fast-day, but would have all kinds of *recherché* dishes, would drink as much wine as they pleased, and would go to the theatre or a ball. I fear there are some fashionable Church-people who make a pretence of fasting in the same way. This is not to fast: Fasting involves self-denial. No rules for

Fasting are laid down either in Holy Scripture or by our Church. Our Lord Jesus Christ fasted by total abstinence from food. The Prophet Daniel, again, fasted not by total abstinence from food, but by abstinence from every sort of enticing food. "I ate no pleasant bread," he says, "neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth." (Daniel x. 3.) To fast so as to gain the promise in the text, we must cultivate a tender conscience, and study our constitution, our occupation, and our circumstances. We do not preach Fasting to a person living on sixpence a day, nor to the sick, or the weak. Some people could not omit one meal without bringing on a headache on the morrow; but if these people, instead of abstaining wholly from food, abstained from dishes of which they are fond, they would probably have fewer headaches. Other people, again, when they are ill, use no other means but abstinence from all food. While Fasting is not for the poor, nor the sick, nor the aged, most people who are in comfortable circumstances would be better physically if they fasted regularly—either abstaining wholly from food on certain days, or denying themselves all luxuries in food and drink. The late Sir Andrew Clark once said to me that if English people lived abstemiously he never would have made a fortune. And besides the bodily health gained, would people not gain in spiritual health by fasting

regularly? Would they not at least learn sympathy with the great army of the poor? Would they not be in a fitter frame of mind to repent truly of their sins? Would their spiritual sense not be quickened to consider their latter end, to meditate on the wonders of Redemption by Jesus Christ? Would their souls not be strengthened to pray and to withstand temptation? Would they not, at the very least, be reminded that they are mortal, and that there is a God?

Fasting, also, must not be carried to excess, so as to sour the temper and unfit us for our daily work or duty, to so weaken the powers of mind and body that we shall see visions and dream dreams.

It is most important to remember that Fasting is a means not an end; that it has no merit in itself, and is only valuable so far as it is done in accordance with the will of God, and so far as it enables us to get nearer God, or aids us in bringing others nearer to Him. Yet, if a person came to me and said, "I have fasted, and have received no benefit," I would give him the same answer I would give a person who said he had attended Church, and never received any good:—"The fault must be in yourself, not in the means. Do not give up the means of grace, but use them humbly and hopefully as God's appointed channels of communication, and assuredly you shall receive a blessing, for He is

faithful Who has promised, 'Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly.'"

Let us be careful neither to fast that we may be seen of men, nor yet be ashamed before men of fasting; neither to pride ourselves on our self-denial nor despise others because, as we suppose, they do not fast.

If we have any regard for the authority of the Bible, for the example of Christ and His Apostles, and of the most holy men in every Dispensation, we shall fast in some measure and according to some method. As the holy George Herbert has written :—

"It's true we cannot reach Christ's fortieth day;
Yet, to go part of that religious way,
Is better than to rest.
We cannot reach our Saviour's purity;
Yet are we bid, *Be holy even as He.*
In both let's do our best.

Who goeth in the way which Christ hath gone,
Is much more sure to meet with Him, than one
That travelleth by-ways.
Perhaps my God, though He be far before,
May turn, and take me by the hand; and more,
May strengthen my decays."

If Christians refuse to use this means of grace, which Christ commends, which He and His Apostles used, can they expect to receive the blessing of obedient children of God, or to gain Heaven at the last?

So far, in discussing the question, How shall we fast? we have considered only abstinence from food, wholly or in part, but abstinence from food alone will not bring that reward which Christ has promised in our text. What saith the Lord by the Prophet Isaiah? (lviii. 3-8): "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge? Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness: ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high. Is it such a fast that I have chosen? a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the Lord? Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?" Abstinence from food is not enough in itself. If we would fast so as to bring down a blessing on our souls, our abstinence from food must be accompanied by avoidance of all worldly pleasure

and amusement, by fighting against sin and fleeing from temptation, by going as often as possible to the house of God, by true repentance and sorrow for sin, by prayer and meditation and the reading of God's Holy Word, by self-examination and heavenly contemplation, by forming good resolves for the future, by devoting what we save from food and amusements to Christ, His Church, and His poor, and by giving our spare time to works of mercy, for the love of Christ our Saviour.

If we fast thus, not priding ourselves on our fasting, nor making a parade of our fasting, nor trusting in it, but trusting only in the merits of our Redeemer, we shall inherit the blessing, "Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."

"Thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly." Has it not been ever so? Is it not so recorded in the Bible? For the time would fail me to tell of Moses, who with fasting received the Law from God on Mount Sinai; of Samuel, who subdued the Philistines; of Jehoshaphat, who smote the Moabites and Ammonites; of Elijah, who journeyed to Horeb and heard the voice of God; of Ezra, who led the chosen people to the Promised Land; of Nehemiah, who procured the re-building of Jerusalem; of Esther, who overthrew the machinations of her enemies; of

Ahab, who had the curse pronounced against his house postponed; of Nineveh, which was saved from the threatened doom; of Daniel, who beheld the vision of the Redeemer's Kingdom; of Anna, who saw Him for whom she had so long waited, the Lord's Christ; of Cornelius, who was visited by an angel and had the Gospel brought to his house; of S. Peter, who was taught that the gates of the Church of Christ were to be opened to all nations; and of Saul of Tarsus, who, at the end of three days of fasting and prayer, received this message by Ananias, "Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost." (Acts ix. 17.) These all found the true source of their strength and success in their faithful observance of the obligation of Fasting as prescribed by the Divine Lawgiver. What they thus found, holy men and women in every age and nation have verified. May we by like means attain like glorious consummation!

Almsgiving.

II.

Almsgiving.

S. Matthew vi. 1-4.

"Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in Heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly."

HAVE never, during the whole course of my life, heard a sermon on the subject of Almsgiving. I have heard many sermons preached in behalf of various religious and philanthropic objects, Home Missions, Foreign Missions, Missions to the Jews, Education, Hospitals, but never once have I heard a sermon on the general duty of giving to God. I believe my experience is not by any means singular. I should be curious to know how many of you in church this evening have heard a sermon on the subject. I understand that I have not been exceptionally unfortunate in this matter, for no one I have questioned

could tell me that he ever heard any teaching as to what proportion of our means we should give to God, and in what spirit we should give. Some time ago I received a printed letter entitled, "The Pew to the Pulpit." The letter is by a layman, and is an appeal to the Clergy for simple and explicit teaching. The writer says that teaching on the subject of proportionate giving to God is not general; and I think he does not exaggerate the case. In so far as we Clergy omit to bring before our people, at stated times, the duty of devoting to sacred purposes a just proportion of their means, so far are we keeping back from them a main element of the Gospel. It is true that the laity may learn their duty in this matter from the Bible; but many of them have not time and opportunity as we have to bring together the various passages in God's Word which treat of it. And besides this, we all require to be reminded of duties which we thoroughly understand. There is no excuse for our neglecting to preach on the subject, for there constantly occur in the Service for the Day passages of Holy Scripture enforcing the duty of Almsgiving. In preaching on giving alms we are only following the example of Christ and His Apostles. We are not left to our own free-will in the matter:—"Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living

God, Who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy vi. 17-19.) The difference between the language used here and that which we commonly employ shows how far we have gone from the truth and how oblivious we are of our plain duty. We speak of "making an appeal" for a certain charity, of "pleading for" a certain object; and the way we sometimes speak from the pulpit about giving might lead a Heathen present in our assembly to think that we are pleading our own cause, not that of God, that we are speaking in our own name instead of in the Name of Him Whose ambassadors we are. Holy Scripture does not command us to "make an appeal," to "plead," but says, "Charge them." The language used is taken from the action of a Judge in a Court of Justice; not from that of a mendicant imploring alms. As if it were said, Charge them now as a Judge would give a charge in an earthly Court of Justice, "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate," lest in another Court, the High Court of the Universe, they hear the dread words, "I was an hungered, and ye gave Me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no

drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in: naked, and ye clothed Me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited Me not." (S. Matthew xxv. 42, 43.)

Holy Scripture commands us to teach the people liberality. And our Church does the same. In the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of Ireland there is this rubric at the close of the Communion Office, "All ministers shall exhort their people to communicate frequently. And every parishioner shall from time to time be exhorted to contribute regularly of his substance to the maintenance of the worship of God, according as God shall prosper him." If we refuse to obey the voice of God and of His Church, can we reasonably complain that the people committed to our care are niggardly in their offerings?

I do not deny that there are more enticing subjects on which to preach than Almsgiving—the love of God, the joys of Heaven, Redemption by Christ Jesus. I do not deny that but for the examples of preaching we have in the Bible, we should avoid the subject altogether. I do not deny that to speak plainly on the subject, as Christ and His Apostles spoke, requires courage, means the taking up of a cross. We are conscious that there is an antagonism—yes, an antagonism—in the minds of many people towards the preacher of a charity sermon; and the consciousness

that we have not the sympathy of our audience in any matter on which we address them is always more or less paralysing. This antagonism, however, although deplorable, is not utterly discouraging. On the contrary, it is the only sign that certain souls are not dead in trespasses and sins; for it comes from the stings of a guilty conscience, from the feeling aroused in certain people that they have not been doing their duty in the past, from the struggle between good and evil, the sense that here is another opportunity of doing good, coupled with the miserly unwillingness to take advantage of it. And perhaps it is not revealing too much of "a parish priest's secret" to say that a Clergyman is not very long in any place until he is able to distinguish between those who contribute to religious objects according to their means and those who do not. They who give as God has prospered them, never complain about the number of charity sermons. They give as much as they can afford, and their conscience is at rest. If not able to give largely to everything, they do not object to others who are better off having an opportunity of giving. They, on the other side, who do not give in proportion to their means, have an uneasy conscience, they are irritated because people with smaller incomes give more generously than they, and so they complain of the many calls on them, the

number of charity sermons in their church. Preaching liberality to people, I admit, is not a pleasant task. A call to give is an appeal against selfishness; and to suppose that there are not some selfish people in every congregation, would be to imagine that the Millennium had already begun.

Certain semi-Christian ideas held by some people add to the difficulty of preaching about giving to God. Some say, "Is not preaching about doing alms preaching mere morality?" Indeed, we reply, we did think that our Lord's Sermon on the Mount was an example of evangelical preaching, and a good deal of it is occupied with "mere morality." "Would it not be better to preach faith alone," ask others, "and then Almsgiving and all other duties would flow from it?" To this it should be replied that Christ and His Apostles did not think so, for they taught Almsgiving as well as faith. It is true that if men had living faith, Almsgiving and every other Christian duty would follow; but when we preach on such a moral truth as that of giving to God, it should convince those who flatter themselves that they have faith, but do not abound in this grace of giving, that their faith is not of the right kind. In any case, we as Preachers are bound to follow the example of Christ. Others, again, who do not seem to understand what they say nor whereof they affirm,

ask, "Would it not be better, instead of preaching about Almsgiving, to preach the Gospel, to preach Christ to the people?" We reply that we did think that Christ preached the Gospel, and He preached giving of alms; we did think that S. Paul preached Christ, and he taught this duty often.

In our text Christ teaches that if we give alms, not to gain the praise of men, but in a proper spirit, we shall be rewarded: "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." Other verses in Holy Writ speak of this as sowing and reaping, and represent the amount of reward reaped as in proportion to the seed sown:—"But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians ix. 6, 7.) The figure here employed is not peculiar to the Holy Bible, but is used in literature and in everyday life. Sometimes by the season of sowing is meant the years of our youth, and sometimes the whole of our mortal life. Sometimes the season of reaping represents the mature years and old age of man, and sometimes the life after death. Have you ever known children intimately, and, after a few years, met them again when they were grown-up

men and women? The effect is very curious. It is not merely the change from the playfulness and thoughtlessness of childhood to the staidness of maturity which strikes us, but most strange it seems to find those whom a few years ago we tossed and tumbled as playthings, "all their curls about our knees," now with settled characters, peculiar dispositions, and opinions of their own. These characters, these temperaments and opinions are the result of the education and of the surrounding circumstances of childhood: they are the reaping of that which was sown in the previous years of life. Take a step forward of some years, and you stand by the grave of one whom you knew in childhood and manhood, and you see as in a picture all his past life—its environments, actions, opinions: and the thought irresistibly comes to you that the reaping of all that was sown in the past has begun in another world. We all recognize this principle of sowing and reaping as applied to our general conduct. We have seen that if a young man sows his wild oats, he will reap a crop of the same. If a boy is indolent at school, he will reap the fruit in inefficiency and worry during the rest of his life. If a young girl is inattentive in learning home duties, she will reap a crop of misery for herself, her husband, and her children when she comes to have a house of her own. This principle of

sowing and reaping commends itself to our judgment in regard to our actions and words in general; but it is not perhaps so easy to understand what we are told in the verse quoted, that the same law holds in money dedicated to God, that if we give sparingly, we shall reap sparingly; and if we give bountifully, we shall reap bountifully. Undoubtedly it requires some faith to believe, when the alms are being collected in Church, that according as we contribute so shall we be blessed by God; yet this is what S. Paul affirms.

"But," asks someone, "does the Apostle really mean that men shall be rewarded for devoting money to religious objects; and, if so, what then becomes of his doctrine that we are justified by faith?" Now, we may be sure, S. Paul does not contradict himself, for he was severely logical. People who see a difficulty here, see it because they believe only one doctrine of the Gospel, whereas S. Paul believed all. Most decidedly he states that we are justified by faith, and he also distinctly states that we shall be rewarded for our works; and he explains in these verses that the works for which we shall be rewarded are those which proceed from a right disposition, those which are done not grudgingly or of necessity, but willingly and cheerfully. The truth that we shall be judged according to our works is as plainly and as frequently stated in the

New Testament as the doctrine that we are justified by faith.

I think I hear someone say, "Are you not afraid to preach this doctrine, that men shall be rewarded for money given to sacred purposes? Are you not afraid that it will lead people to trust in their works, instead of in Christ Jesus?" No, indeed, I answer, I am not at all afraid to preach it. My Master, Jesus, preached it, and why should not I? He did not "trim," nor "hedge," nor tone down, and say, "I hope you will not understand Me as saying so-and-so," or, "I hope you will not fall into such an error"; He affirms plainly and without apology, "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly." Since Christ taught the doctrine, we cannot refuse to teach it. And I am not at all afraid that the teaching of it will lead people to trust in their works. There are very few who have any good works in which they can trust. There are not many men of my acquaintance who are at all likely to trust in the money which they give to God. They would have a powerful imagination, indeed, if they should fancy that there was any merit in their paltry gifts. Can you imagine a man trusting in the merits of his Almsgiving who lives in a house the rent of which is £50, and contributes to the offertory on Sunday one penny, to be "presented"

to Him Who shed His precious blood to save his soul? No; from the miserable amounts which most well-to-do people give to God, I conclude that there is not much danger of their trusting in their alms-deeds.

The reward which God has been graciously pleased to promise for anything given for Christ's sake is sometimes spoken of in the Bible in general terms, as in our text, "Thy Father which seeth in secret Himself shall reward thee openly," and in those other words of our Lord, "Whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My Name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward"; and in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi. 10), "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward His Name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." In other places of Holy Writ the reward which God of His free grace has promised to generous deeds of charity done for His sake is spoken of as (1) a material reward; (2) a spiritual reward; (3) an eternal reward. We shall consider, as briefly as possible, these promised blessings.

I. God has promised prosperity in this world to those who devote to Him cheerfully a liberal proportion of their income or earnings. It is written, "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of

all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." (Proverbs iii. 9, 10.) "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (Proverbs xi. 24, 25.) "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord; and that which he hath given will He pay him again." (Proverbs xix. 17.) "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." (S. Luke vi. 38.)

And, considering the reward of generosity as worldly prosperity, we can understand how the natural law of sowing and reaping holds good; for the man who obeys these commands will be a steady, industrious man. He will not gamble, nor drink, nor squander his money, and he will consequently be a prosperous man, even as men count prosperity. And this is but the earthly side of the matter. If we consider all the chances of fortune, we can easily understand how God can send a man prosperity; for is it not He Who gives the active brain and the strong arm by which men gain wealth?

"But," says someone, "I knew one or two men who were very liberal both to Christ's Church and to His

poor, and yet they never amassed wealth." Nevertheless, we reply, the promise stands sure; and if these men did not receive the promise, there must in their case have been some good cause. (1) God may have seen that they could not bear prosperity, and so kept back from them a temporal reward in order to give them an eternal one. (2) Or they may have deprived themselves of their reward by sins of another sort than stinginess. If they gave liberally to God, perhaps they gave also liberally to the devil. (3) Or perhaps they were slothful in their farming, or business, or profession. (4) Or they may not have given in the right spirit, for Christ's sake. Then consider, further, that what God promises is not wealth, but prosperity. If a man is determined to be a millionaire, I do not say that he might not be more successful by sacrificing to Satan than to God—cheating, giving bad value, lending money at exorbitant interest, taking advantage of the simpleton's ignorance and of the necessity of the poor. But has God no winged arrows to reach such wretches, no poison to distil through their blood, no wild agonies of nerve and brain in reserve for them? All who have known much of the private lives of men will confess that the wise man is right: "Better is little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure and trouble therewith. Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a

stalled ox and hatred therewith." (Proverbs xv. 16, 17.) "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right." (Proverbs xvi. 8.) "Better is an handful with quietness, than both the hands full with travail and vexation of spirit." (Ecclesiastes iv. 6.) And yet in spite of all that has been written by inspired men and philosophers, in spite of warnings from the wise, and our own experience, most of us, if given the choice, would prefer riches to comfortable circumstances. Now, there is a great difference in happiness between poverty and easy circumstances, a great difference between an income so meagre that you must think anxiously whether you can afford the smallest extra outlay, and an income which although not large is sufficient with economy to provide all necessary comforts. But there is really no difference in happiness between such an income as I have last referred to and untold wealth. I have heard a lady who had been left a considerable property say that she and her husband and children were just as happy when they had but £300 a year, as when she had come into all her riches. It is related that a gentleman said to Mr. Astor, the American millionaire, "You must be a very happy man with all your immense wealth." "Well," asked Mr. Astor, "would you manage all my property for your board, and lodging, and clothes, and an occasional drive in a carriage, or a ride on horse-

back?" "I certainly would not," was the answer. "That is all I get out of it," said Mr. Astor. God has promised a reward in this world's goods to those who give largely of their means to His cause. It is better for us to leave to His disposal the measure of prosperity He sees best for us. Even a Heathen would teach us that this is wise. Juvenal says to the Romans in one of his Satires, "You pray for riches, and children, and long life, oblivious of the fact that you may be praying for curses instead of blessings. Why do ye not ask the gods to give you what they see to be best?" Or, if we express any choice in the matter, let it be the prayer of Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." (Proverbs xxx. 8, 9.)

II. God has promised a spiritual reward to those who devote a proper amount of their income to His work.

You may read in Psalm xli. 1-3, "Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and Thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: Thou wilt make all his bed in his sick-

ness." In the Book of the Prophet Malachi (iii. 10) it is written: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of Heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." And S. Paul writes to the Galatians (vi. 6, 7): "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." The angel of God said to Cornelius, "Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God" (Acts x. 4), and as a consequence the Gospel was brought to Cornelius by S. Peter.

If many of our people are spiritually dead, if many are unable to find the peace of God, if many go away from church discontented and unblessed, can it be wondered at, when one sees in a well-to-do congregation the alms-dish piled up with pennies and half-pennies? Is it because God has said, "The silver and gold are Mine," that people who have plenty to spend in pleasure offer Him copper instead? It is to be carefully borne in mind that just as giving in due proportion and in the right spirit draws down a blessing on our souls, so also the withholding of this from God brings

down upon us a curse. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation." (Malachi iii. 8, 9.) So, then, the withholding from the Church of Christ of a proper proportion of our means is called robbing God. How few Christians consider this. "Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to Me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment." (S. Matthew xxv. 45, 46.) The rich man in the parable is condemned to torment in the next world, not for drunkenness, nor for lying, nor for cheating, but for the sin of living luxuriously every day and neglecting the beggar at his gate. What, then, will be the end of those who live in grand houses and wear fine clothes, and contribute a threepenny piece to a special collection; threepence in the year to send, for example, the Gospel to the heathen? "I always tremble," says a preacher, "for any cause on behalf of which I am pleading, when I see a large number of sealskin jackets in church; for I know that a sealskin jacket means threepence to the offertory—nothing more and nothing less. Nothing more—for many who are fond of sealskin jackets cannot afford anything more than threepence; nothing less—for less than a threepenny piece would

not be in keeping with the dignity of a sealskin jacket."

III. God has also promised a reward in the life to come to those who willingly give to His Church and His poor, in proportion as He has prospered them. "Make to yourselves friends by the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." (S. Luke xvi. 9.) "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." (S. Luke xiv. 13, 14.) "Charge them that are rich in this world . . . that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy vi. 17-19.) It is only because Christ Himself has told us plainly and frequently that there is a necessary connection between Almsgiving and eternal life, that we venture to preach it: indeed, it is to be feared that in spite of the fact that Christ and His Apostles have taught us that our state in the life to come, for weal or woe, will depend in part on the amount of our substance which we have given to God, and the spirit in which we have given it, some are still afraid

to preach it. "If, therefore, ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (S. Luke xvi. 11.) I shall quote one other passage to prove the proposition before us: "Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was an hungered, and ye gave Me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave Me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took Me in: naked, and ye clothed Me: I was sick, and ye visited Me: I was in prison, and ye came unto Me." (S. Matthew xxv. 34-36.)

I think I hear someone say, "I always believed that doctrine, but never heard it preached before. I have wasted a good deal of money on myself, and what little I gave in charity I gave with grumbling. I think, however, I have still enough left to purchase for myself eternal life." To such we say, Thy money perish with thee, for thinkest thou that the gift of God, which is eternal life, can be purchased with money?

"That is the doctrine for me," says another; "I have lived a careless life always, a life absolutely bad sometimes. I am rejoiced to know that I can compound for my sins by giving to religious objects a large proportion of my wealth." To such we say, "Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and

gold . . . but with the precious blood of Christ." (1 S. Peter i. 18, 19.)

And that there may be no mistake, I would remind all that while giving liberally to God of that which He has given us is one condition of salvation, it is only one. Many other conditions are laid down in Holy Scripture, the briefest summary of which, perhaps, is that we should live a life by faith in the Son of God, Who loved us and gave Himself for us. If giving in charity could atone for our sins, the Incarnation would not have been a necessity. But while Almsgiving cannot procure our salvation, God has been graciously pleased to promise to reward it of His free favour, if performed in the right spirit. The Christian Covenant, to which we become parties in Baptism, implies the fulfilling of certain conditions. Wherefore, although we shall not be saved by our good works, we shall not be saved without them. Against the idea of buying eternal life with our alms-deeds, the following story may be taken as a warning. A wealthy Scotchman, who was notorious for his miserliness, was visited on his death-bed by the Minister. It was evident that his conscience was ill at ease, and at last he said to the Minister, "Isn't it true that God will reward one in the next world for money given in charity in this?" The Minister replied this was so. "Weel," he continued,

"a' ken a' hae no been very generous; and dae ye think, noo, it would gie me a better chance where a'm going if a' left a large sum to the Kirk?" "A widna say," replied the Minister, "but it micht be worth riskin' it." If the man had been sincerely penitent, he would have given spontaneously and unconditionally out of love to Christ, hoping for nothing again; and in that case God would have given him His blessing. Let anyone who would drive a bargain with the Almighty in this way, study the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard. (S. Matthew xix. 27—xx. 16.)

In addition to those direct rewards which God has graciously promised for alms given in His Name, He also blesses the giver indirectly. By giving to any worthy object, we gain an interest in that object. Our minds are raised to a higher plane, and we breathe a diviner air. We no longer brood unhealthily over our own difficulties; but lose ourselves in the wants and woes of others. Thus we learn unselfishness, something of the mind that was in Christ Jesus. Our sympathy is enlarged, our feelings are touched, our hearts softened. We become in time more tender and gentle towards others, more loving and more loveable. And while we do not give in order to gain a reward, but for the sake of Him Who emptied Himself of all riches on our behalf, we have the satisfaction of reflecting that our treasure

is in Heaven, "where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal." (S. Matthew vi. 20.) The uncertainties of riches are great; but we have something laid by in store beyond the reach of the changes and chances of this mortal life. We think of all that Jesus has done for us, and it is joy for us to know that He by the Holy Spirit has enabled us to do even a little, according to our means, for His loved ones; and we look forward to the day when we shall hear His voice, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me." (S. Matthew xxv. 40.) Already we experience the truth of that which He has spoken, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." (Acts xx. 35.)

No one who studies the subject in Holy Scripture will look on the giving of alms as a work of supererogation, but as the duty of every Christian. Giving to God is an essential part of Public Worship. It was so in the Jewish Church: it is so in the Christian. When the Jews appeared before the Lord, they were commanded not to appear empty-handed (Deuteronomy xvi. 16); and S. Paul writes to the Corinthians (1 Epistle xvi. 2), "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come." It has

always been the custom of the Christian Church to make Almsgiving a part of Public Worship. See how solemnly this duty is prescribed in that branch of the Church Catholic to which we belong :—" Whilst these sentences are in reading, the Deacons, Churchwardens, or other fit persons appointed for that purpose, shall receive the Alms for the Poor, and other devotions of the people, in a decent bason to be provided by the Parish for that purpose ; and reverently bring it to the Priest, who shall humbly present and place it upon the holy Table." Wheatley shows that the clause "other devotions of the people," means offerings given for the support of the Clergy. Notice the words "humbly present." Present to whom ? To whom but to God ? If our alms are not given to Him, they are worth nothing in a religious sense. I fear that few remember this truth when the collection is being made—that what they give is presented to God. If they did, I cannot think they would contribute the paltry amount to the offertory which they do. Before the offerings are collected, we should think seriously how much we owe to God, and then give gladly as He has prospered us, saying in our hearts, " Lord, I thank Thee for the unspeakable gift of Thy Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. Accept this offering for His sake, and may it be for Thy glory and the spread of Thy Kingdom." Then

we should not go away from church unblessed as we do, but should hear the Divine Voice say, "Thy prayer is heard, and thine alms are had in remembrance in the sight of God." (Acts x. 31.) But how can the solemnity of this part of our worship be present to the minds of a congregation if the organist plays a Voluntary during the offertory, and the people sit in their pews, some discussing the latest piece of gossip, some admiring the newest fashion? Are we Clergy not guilty in this matter in the sight of God? Would any of us present to an earthly Sovereign a gift in the irreverent way in which we present it to the King of Kings? And just as surely as Christ Jesus on a certain day in Jerusalem "sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury," so surely is He present now in every assembly of the faithful, and notes every gift and every giver.

As God has made the giving of alms one condition of eternal life, it becomes a very important question with us all, How much should I give? When shall I feel my conscience free in this matter? Since God has promised so many and great rewards to Almsgiving, it is not likely that He would leave us without any guidance as to what proportion of our means we should dedicate directly to Him. It will greatly aid all who are really anxious to know the will of Jehovah, to consider what

rule He laid down for that nation whom He chose, in a peculiar sense, to be His own. Under the Theocracy we find God remonstrating with the people for neglecting or refusing to pay their tithes. He calls this robbing Him; and He promises that if all the tithes are paid, He will pour out upon the people a great blessing. Tithe is tenth; and amongst the Jews there were two tithes, one annual, the other triennial. Besides these there were various free-will offerings, voluntary donations for special objects, such as erecting the tabernacle, the temple, etc. It has been computed that in these various ways the Jews gave to sacred purposes one-fourth of their earnings. In the passage referred to in the Book of the Prophet Malachi, God says that the people are heavily cursed because they have not contributed the tenth of their income. But the idea that one should give a tithe of his income to God was not first taught under the Law. Long before the Law was given from Sinai, it is recorded that Abraham gave a tenth of the spoil, which he had recovered, to Melchizedek. Melchizedek, as King of Jerusalem, hardly required such alms, but Abraham gave to him as Priest of the Most High God, this proportion of the spoil as a token of thankfulness and acknowledgment of his dependence on God. (Genesis xiv. 19.)

Jacob, again, vowed unto God at Bethel, "Of all that

Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." (Genesis xxviii. 22.)

And this is not all. Selden, in his exhaustive treatise "On Tithes," shows that various heathen nations were in the habit of dedicating to religious objects one tenth of their substance. Now, how came this remarkable consensus? How did it come to pass that Patriarchs, Jews, and Heathen agreed in giving one tenth to religion? There seems to me only one adequate explanation, that God revealed to mankind in an early age the proportion which was to be dedicated to Him.

The Christian measure of giving as laid down in the New Testament is "as God hath prospered" us. And shall we Christians, with all our superior privileges under the Gospel-Dispensation, give less than Jews, less than Patriarchs, less even than the Heathen? The early Christians did not so understand their duty.

It is evident that there is great ignorance on the question as to what proportion of our means we should give in charity, for I have heard people boast of the amount they gave away who, if they had ever studied the question, would have been ashamed to mention the amount. It is not uncommon to hear a person say in an injured tone, "My church costs me £12 a year," whereas, had he been under any other Dispensation, it would have cost him £120 instead of £12. We sin in

this way through ignorance. We have never thought seriously what proportion of our means God expects from us; and we think we give more than we really do. If we counted up the sums we give in charity, we should discover that we are not as generous as we suppose. If we wish to have a clear conscience, we shall keep an accurate account of every penny we receive as income in the course of the year, and of every penny we give in charity. The small amount of the latter will make most of us ashamed and cause us to alter the measure of our giving. Count up the amount you are in the habit of contributing at the Offertory every Sunday and see what it comes to in the year. And to what else do you contribute in connection with the Church? You grumble, perhaps, at what the Church costs you, while you forget what you owe to the Church—the Holy Bible, the Ministry, the Sacraments, and all the means of grace. How absurd to hear a wealthy man say, when he has given what costs him nothing, "I have given my mite," forgetting that the two mites were all the poor Widow possessed. If Christ were visibly present in church asking for offerings, I cannot think that many would present to Him the paltry sums which they give at the Offertory; and He is present. When one comes to think how much in proportion those who are not too well-off give in alms compared with the

gifts of the wealthy, one begins to comprehend the meaning of Christ's words, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God." (S. Mark x. 23.) Before we decide how much we should give to an Offertory or any other call upon us, we should ask ourselves how much we owe to Christ; and meditate on the fact that once in helpless infancy we had nothing to give, and yet once again we shall be in the same position—"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." (1 Timothy vi. 7.) We do not really possess what we have in this world. We are no more than stewards of it; and soon we shall be asked to render up our account. And all these blessed chances of doing good are fast passing away; and very soon we shall not have another opportunity of showing in this way our love to Jesus. How much we owe Him for His great love! "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." (2 Corinthians viii. 9.)

But I think I hear someone object, "You say that a tenth was the proportion devoted to God in all ages, and we Christians should give no less; but others do not give in this proportion; why should I?" Indeed I do not see why you should, if neither the love of

God nor the necessities of your fellow-men move you. Beware, however, of the argument you use. It has resulted in the loss of many a soul. You shall not be judged by your neighbour's conduct, but by the law of God—"Every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans xiv. 12.)

"If the object were the very best," says another, "perhaps we might subscribe to it in this proportion of a tenth." The answer to this is clear. Judaism was not by any means free from blots in the days of our Lord's life upon earth; yet our Lord gave to it. The Temple service was not perfect; yet He approves of the widow's two mites. One would suppose that with the many religious and philanthropic works in the present day a man would not have any difficulty in choosing some object which had his hearty approval. There are Home Missions and Foreign Missions, Church Extension, the Ministry, Education, Hospitals, Church Building and Restoration, the Sick, the Poor, and all who are broken down in fortune, "whom unmerciful Disaster has followed fast and followed faster," until "their life hangs in doubt before them," cast off by friends, deprived of the comforts of life to which they once were accustomed, with no goal but the grave, no hope but Heaven. The case of those who are broken down in fortune should touch the hearts of

all who are wealthy. I cannot understand how ladies who will weep over *Romeo and Juliet* can close their ears to "a story of more woe" among their own acquaintance; how they can live in the lap of luxury while so many of their own sex, brought up no less tenderly and delicately than they, are cast off by Fortune, deprived of the merest necessaries of life, with no ability to earn a crust of bread, and yet forced to earn it or be found some morning in a garret, all emaciated and in rags, life's battle lost—and won. Yet I have been told by ladies who collect subscriptions for such pitiable cases that they never apply to their own sex if they can avoid it. Gentlemen, they tell me, will give, and the poor will give, but ladies will ask, "Why is this lady in such poverty? It surely must be her own fault if she is in such bad circumstances." My own experience is that there are many ladies and many gentlemen to whom if you appeal in behalf of any one of these objects named, you will find that that is just the one purpose to which they object to subscribe! This is how they are "laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1 Timothy vi.19.)

Others, again, excuse themselves from giving by saying, "If we were rich we would subscribe, but we are really poor." Note the indignation of these same people when

they have heard that some of their neighbours have described them as poor! And are they "really poor"? Look at their houses, their furniture, their table; where is the evidence of poverty? There are those who can afford to drink champagne without any excuse of sickness or ill-health, but who cannot afford a subscription to a Clothing Fund, to Hospitals, or to the poor in any way. It is only a repetition of the first act of the old, old tragedy of Dives and Lazarus. The last act will be upon another stage than this.

I have been told by numbers who volunteer as Collectors for various Charities, that it is difficult to do this work for any length of time and retain faith in humanity; yet we should not forget the many who give so largely that one wonders how they can afford so much, the many who give gladly out of their poverty, the many who give so cheerfully that one can see that the "love of Christ constrains" them. With the rest I would leave this Divine sentence, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 S. John iii. 17.)

I have not time left to speak as I would of the spirit in which we should give; for if we do not give in the right spirit, while our gifts may be valuable towards the particular object, they have no value towards our Father

in Heaven. I will summarize as briefly as possible the teaching of God's Word on this point:—

1. I have already shown that our alms to be acceptable to God must be in proportion to our means "as God hath prospered" us. I think you have heard of the gentleman who during the week assured his friend that one could not get a cigar worth smoking for less than sixpence; and who in church on Sunday says to the same friend, "Lend me a penny for the Collection. I have nothing less with me than a sixpenny piece." While this story is not told to teach that it is wrong for us to have what little comforts we can afford without robbing God or our neighbour, it is a satire on the ideas which some *gentlemen* have of what proportion of their means they should devote to God.

2. Our gifts to be accepted by God must cost us something, must involve some self-denial. The Widow's offering, commended by our Lord, cost her much. When Ornan offered to David everything he required for the sacrifice, David refused and said, "I will not take that which is thine for the Lord, nor offer burnt offerings without cost." (1 Chronicles xxi. 24.) And our alms, if offered in the right spirit, are a sacrifice unto God. "To do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased." (Hebrews xiii. 16.) "I have all and abound: I am full,

having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." (Philippians iv. 18.)

3. We must not give indiscriminately, nor from impulse, but systematically, and in the fear of God. To give to everyone who implores our aid is criminal folly: most of us have limited incomes, and to give to unworthy persons, those, for example, who are idle and will not work, is to deprive ourselves of the means of helping others who are worthy. We must not wait until our feelings are moved by some eloquent sermon or touching appeal; but we must sit down in a prayerful spirit, count up what our income is, think over all the objects to which we should subscribe, and apportion our subscriptions to the best of our judgment. If everyone did this conscientiously, there would be no necessity for those who are called to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments to give one fourth of their time, as they sometimes do, to the serving of tables; and there would be funds sufficient for all philanthropic and religious works.

4. We must not give as if there were any merit in our giving, or with the idea of reaping a reward, but for the love of God, for the sake of Christ Jesus. When we have given all we can we should say, "All

things come of Thee, *and of Thine own* have we given Thee." (1 Chronicles xxix. 14.)

5. We must not give morosely nor by compulsion, "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians ix. 7.) I fear that some of us lose the reward even of the little we give. "Oh, here is another charity sermon!" we exclaim. "Here is this man coming to preach again for that Society!" If we can give only a little, let us give it cheerfully, and leave to others who can afford it to give more—giving to the Lord, and not as to men.

6. We must not put off giving until our death, to have it mentioned in the papers, perhaps, that we have left such and such sums to various charities. To leave money in our Will to religious uses is to give it from our heirs, not from ourselves. It is better for us to see in our own life-time the good of what we give; and to see that it is devoted to the object for which we give it, for Governments have now so far declined even from heathen morality that they have no compunction in diverting to an alien object funds left in a man's Last Will and Testament for a specific purpose, nay, in prostituting to secular uses, as in the case of tithes, alms left to the Religion of Christ.

7. One would suppose that with the plain warning in the text it would be unnecessary to say, We must

not give to be seen of men; and yet I have heard a man professing Christianity say he wished he were rich, so that he could endow a hospital or something of that sort, and so have his name handed down to future generations. How do men commit the sin of "blowing a trumpet" now-a-days? By giving that they may see their names in a List of Subscribers. By sending to the daily papers an account of their own good works, not for the glory of God, but the glorification of themselves. They have their reward—that is, the praise of men; they receive the only reward they seek, and none other. Two gentlemen of position were in a certain church at Service. When the time for the offertory came, one said to the other, "Give me a sixpence; I have only got a penny of small change." "You need not mind," said the other, "they have got alms-bags in this Church; no one will see what you put in." And this gentleman had read the Sermon on the Mount.

Conversion.

III.

Conversion.

S. Matthew xviii. 3.

(Authorised Version.)

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

(Revised Version.)

"Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

AM to speak to you this evening on the subject of Conversion, and at once many questions press on us for an answer:—What is the popular idea of Conversion? Does this idea correspond with the teaching of Holy Scripture? If not, what is the teaching of the Bible on the subject? Is it a change which is necessary for every one? Is the whole Gospel comprehended in it, and the whole Christian life? I hope that you will lay aside all passion and prejudice, and approach the subject to study it with the same earnestness with which I have myself studied it.

There are some men, says a modern philosopher, to whom it is as great a pleasure to expose an old error as

to discover a new truth. I am about to expose a new error, and to show forth an old truth.

First of all, I shall point out to you the erroneous ideas which some people have of Conversion, and then we shall be in a position to hear the truth as it is taught in God's Word.

I. The first error consists in the magic meaning which the word Conversion has in the minds and on the lips of many. Words, says an English philosopher, are the counters of wise men and the money of fools. Man, it has been said, is the slave of habit. It might be added that man is the slave of words. Some of them, like "that blessed word Mesopotamia," calm his soul and bring him peace; others, shaking "from their horrid wings" doubt and despair, sound to him as the prelude of the trump of doom. "Conversion" is one of these talismanic words. "Conversion" means simply "turning"; "to convert" is "to turn"; to "be converted" is to "be turned"; yet, if instead of the old familiar words you speak of "turning," to "turn," and to "be turned," while you would express exactly the same Scriptural idea, you would take away from some people all the armour in which they trust.

This is the first abuse of the word Conversion, that it is used in a conjuring sense. And another abuse is that in the popular theology it is made to stand for

more than it ever conveys in the Holy Scriptures. With a voracity equal to that of Aaron's rod, it has swallowed up all the Biblical terms which refer to repentance, turning to God, justification by faith, the renewing of the Holy Ghost. All that God has expressed, sometimes in several phrases, often in many sentences, by the mouth of His holy Prophets, by His Eternal Son, by His inspired Apostles, it is now attempted to express by the one sovereign word "Conversion." Let me refer you, for example, to Isaiah vi. 10, "Lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed." Here "seeing with the eyes, hearing with the ears, and understanding with the heart," evidently refers to repentance; to "convert" refers to turning from sin to holiness; and to "be healed" is to be pardoned. But all that God Himself here expresses by many words, men to-day sum up in one word—Conversion. The same remark applies to a passage in the Acts of the Apostles, iii. 19: "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." This is now resolved into "Be converted." Now surely we are guilty in the sight of God if we pervert a word and make it mean either more or less than it does in the language of

Inspiration. Nowhere in the Bible is Conversion made to mean all that it means in the mouths of many.

A third error attaching to the word Conversion is that it is used in a passive instead of an active sense. The Authorised Version is partly to blame for this error, as it generally reads "be converted," instead of "convert"; but one would have supposed that a class of people who affirm that the Holy Ghost teaches them the meaning of every part of the Bible without any human help, would not have been led into error through the mistake of James the First's Translators. Yet so it is.

I shall now quote to you the various passages in the New Testament in which the word *convert* occurs, and explain the meaning of the original Greek. In order that you may see that it is no "private interpretation" I am giving you, I shall refer to the Revised Version. The first passage which meets us is S. Matthew xiii. 15: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and *should be converted*, and I should heal them." This is a quotation from Isaiah vi. 10. There the original is rightly translated "convert"; here it is wrongly rendered "should be converted." The Revised

Version translates correctly in the active sense, "Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and *should turn again*, and I should heal them."

The next time the word occurs is in our text: "Except ye *be converted*, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." The Revised Version reads, "*Except ye turn*, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven."

The next verse I shall quote is S. Luke xxii. 31: "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when *thou art converted*, strengthen thy brethren." The Revised Version translates in the active sense: "Do thou, when once *thou hast turned again*, stablish thy brethren."

The next place in which the term occurs is in the Acts of the Apostles iii. 19. The Authorised Version reads, "Repent ye therefore, and *be converted*, that your sins may be blotted out." The Revised Version translates here also in the active sense according to the original: "Repent ye therefore, and *turn again*, that your sins may be blotted out."

If, therefore, we are guided by Biblical language, we

must never speak of Conversion in a passive sense, but always in an active. Instead of saying, as is the custom, Such a one has been converted, we should say, Such a one has converted, or, Such a one has turned. Instead of saying, You must be converted, we should say, You must convert, or, You must turn.

We have seen now that the first erroneous idea of Conversion arises from a misuse of the word. (1) Using the word in a conjuring sense. (2) Making it mean more than it ever does mean in the Bible. (3) Using the word in a passive sense, instead of the active sense in which it is used in Holy Scripture.

In connection with the talismanic use of the word Conversion, I should draw your attention to the fact that the term is used in the New Testament in some places in a bad sense; that is, it is used to mean turning from God to Satan, from a life of holiness to a life of wickedness. Galatians iv. 9: "But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how *turn ye again* (same word translated elsewhere 'convert') to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?" 2 S. Peter ii. 21, 22: "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to *turn from* ('convert') the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them

according to the true proverb, the dog *is turned* (*Gr.* 'converting') to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." Accordingly, if we would frame our language by that of the Bible, we should not use the word convert alone, but express what we mean by it; whether, as in these verses, we mean turning from holiness to sin, or as in other verses from sin to holiness. This is the custom of Holy Scripture, that either the context or certain express words show in which sense, good or bad, the word convert is used. Look at the passages I have quoted in which the word is used in a good sense. Either the passages themselves or their context show the sense in which the word is used, explain from what it is men are exhorted to convert or turn. In S. Matthew xiii. 15 it is from impenitence. In our text it is from ambition. In S. Luke xxii. 31 it is from self-confidence, joined to latent cowardice in not confessing Christ. In Acts iii. 19 it is from rejecting the Messiah. In other places the Sacred Writers express directly from what it is men are to convert or turn, or to what. Acts ix. 35: "And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and *turned* ('converted') to the Lord." Acts xi. 21: "And a great multitude believed, and *turned* (converted) unto the Lord." Acts xiv. 15: "That *ye should turn* (convert) from these vanities unto the living God." Acts xxvi.

18: "To open their eyes, and to *turn* them (convert) from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in Me." 1 Thessalonians i. 9: "And how ye *turned* (converted) to God from idols to serve the living and true God."

If, then, we are loyal to Biblical language, we shall never use the word convert or turn without explaining, as the inspired writers do, in what sense we mean it. And if any one should put the common question to you, "Have you been converted?" ask him, "From what?" Ask him, does he mean according to certain passages in the Bible, from Satan to God, or, according to others, from God to Satan.

By the verses to which I have referred you in this lecture you will have noticed that our translators render the same Greek word "convert" and "turn"; and it would I think prepare our minds to study what holy men, when moved by the Spirit of God, wrote on this subject if, instead of always using the magic words "convert," "converted," "conversion," we used at times their exact equivalents, "turn," "turned," "turning."

II. Another unscriptural idea of Conversion is that it is the whole Christian life, and an epitome of all

theology. The doctrine of Justification by Faith is no longer with many Protestants the test of a standing or falling Church, but the doctrine of Conversion. With these Conversion is the sum and substance of all preaching. It is the be-all and the end-all. Any sermon in which the word Conversion is used is passed as evangelical. Any sermon which has no reference to the doctrine is condemned. How the Sermon on the Mount escapes it is difficult to understand. You have but to experience Conversion, say these people, and you are safe. Our Lord says, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life"; but, according to some people, as soon as you have entered the strait gate you are at the wide portal of Heaven itself. The New Testament represents the Christian life as a battle, a race, a wrestling. "Nothing of the kind," say these people, "you have but to make the jump of Conversion, and the whole thing is done." Some, indeed, teach that our probation is finished by two Conversions: you make one leap, and you are sure of Heaven; you make another, and you have attained perfection.

In face of the modern idea that the constant preaching of Conversion is the test of evangelical teaching, that Conversion sums up the whole Gospel, and is the beginning and the ending of the Christian life, there is

the conclusive fact that the word Conversion is found only once in the whole Bible. The cognates of the word, "convert" and "converted," are found several times, but the word Conversion itself only once. This proves that it did not occupy that large place in the teaching of our Lord and His Apostles which it does in the minds of some Christians in our own day. The one place where the word Conversion is found in the Bible is Acts xv. 3: "Declaring the Conversion of the Gentiles"; that is, S. Paul and S. Barnabas told of the turning of the heathen from idolatry to worship the living and true God.

The word Conversion, as used in reference to men, occurs only once in our Book of Common Prayer: "The Conversion of S. Paul."

From the idea that Conversion comprises the whole Christian life, has sprung recently the immoral doctrine that Conversion covers all sins. Let me illustrate what I mean in this way:—You point to a man who is in the habit of breaking the law of God, and you are met with the rejoinder, "Ah! but he is a converted man." Or you speak of a man as upright in all his words and actions, and it is objected, "But the pity is he never has been converted." To speak thus is to confuse virtue and vice; and is not only contrary to the Gospel, but is a declension from

heathen morality. It is bad enough when a man tries others by this immoral test; but when he judges himself by it, it is still worse. I have known one man say to another, "I am converted, and nothing I could do would be a sin: you are unconverted, and you could not do anything that would not be sinful." When brought to the test, however, he could give no reasonable proof that he was converted and his neighbour not; nor could he give any explanation of how it was that the same act done by himself and his neighbour would be accounted by God a sin to the one and not to the other: there was but his own affirmation that it was so. An "evangelistic tent" was set up in the parish of a friend of mine; and it seems to have been understood that he was not favourable to it, for, after it was moved, a lady from a neighbouring parish spoke to him about opposing it, and said it was a pity he had done so as two of his parishioners were "converted" in it. "Indeed," he said, "I was not aware of that. Who are they?" She gave him their names, and then he said to her, "I can only with great difficulty get those men to come to church occasionally, and I know they go to no other house of worship; and they never come to the Lord's Table." "What does it matter," she replied, "whether they go to the Communion or not, if they are converted?" Can a more immoral position

be held than this, that people can deliberately refuse to obey the dying command of their Saviour, that they can forsake the assembling of themselves together, yet if at the same time they profess to be converted, they are on the sure road to Heaven? It would seem as if God had sent them "strong delusion, that they should believe a lie" (2 Thessalonians ii. 11), as a punishment for trusting in themselves that they are righteous, and despising others. (Luke xviii. 9.) The curse of the Prophet Isaiah seems to have lighted upon them (v. 20): "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter." "Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. He that committeth sin is of the devil." (1 S. John iii. 7, 8.) "*He that committeth sin is of the devil*," ay, even though he may say he is converted. There are such things as good and evil, and a man doing evil and professing Conversion cannot make the evil good. "If we *say* that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." (1 S. John i. 6.)

And here we see the gravity of using Scriptural terms in a sense foreign to Scripture.

If men, instead of using the word Conversion in a superstitious sense, had explained, as the Bible does,

what they meant by it (for example, "turn unto the Lord," "turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," "turn from these vanities to serve the living God"), they would not have confounded light and darkness, and good and evil, and vice and virtue, and God and Satan, as they have done. I cannot too strongly impress on you the teaching of God's Word, that the evidence of Conversion is to be sought, not on the lips, but in the life. If a man is not fighting against temptation, and doing the will of God, and submitting himself to be sanctified by the Holy Ghost, let him talk of being converted as he will, he is still "in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity." "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil," not that those profess to be converted and these do not; but that those work righteousness, and these wickedness. (1 S. John iii. 10.)

But some people judge both themselves and others, not by the fruits of Conversion, but by a profession of Conversion. If a man says to them that he is converted, they do not examine whether he is bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, but accept without questioning his own statement; and what is still more curious and absurd, they look on a man who has never *told* them he is converted, as unconverted.

Some time ago I had a letter from a lady, telling me

of the death of a near kinsman. She described him as excellent in all the relations of life, constant in reading the Bible, having family prayer, and using all the means of grace, and then closed her letter very sorrowfully, saying that what concerned her most was he never had been converted. I wrote by return, and asked her why she had written that her friend was unconverted. She replied at once that she concluded he was not converted because he never had told her he was. I then wrote: "You have described to me the life of a converted man; do you mean to say that you conclude he was unconverted *because he never told you* he was converted? Suppose he had been bad-tempered, and selfish, and dishonest, and neglectful in using the means of grace, and had told you, at the same time, that he was converted: would you have believed him?" To which she answered that she never had thought of the matter in that light before, and that my letter had given her great comfort.

Another case of the same sort came to my knowledge. A lady went on a visit to a certain parish of which a friend of mine was Curate. On her return home she wrote to him saying how much benefit she had received from his preaching; but how greatly distressed she was to think that one who could preach such sermons had never been converted. Now, it so happened that my

friend had been wild in his early youth, but had turned to God, led a new life, and was finally ordained to the work of the Ministry. He wrote to the lady, and frankly told her this; whereupon she replied that she was thankful to know he was converted. Is not that a curious idea, that if you tell people you are converted they will believe you, no matter what your life may be; and if you do not tell them you are converted they will put you down as unconverted, no matter what your life may be? In this way a man might be converted to one person whom he had told he was; and unconverted to another person, to whom he had made no verbal profession. If profession be everything, how would the man in this case stand towards God—converted or unconverted? "Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit." (S. Matthew vii. 16, 17.)

III. The doctrine of the indefectibility of grace is connected in the teaching of some people with Conversion. This doctrine, that there is a certain amount of grace which, if we receive, we can never lose, hardly deserves more serious consideration than the Vatican Decrees. Both fall before the ancient test of truth: "That which is new is not true." If you point those

who hold this doctrine to Judas as an instance of falling from grace given, they will reply, "But Judas never was converted." Some of them are, however, in this dilemma, that as they believe the Church of Christ should be perfect, they are forced to confess, either that Judas lost the grace once given him, or that Christ sent out an unconverted Minister to preach the Gospel—in fact, that He sent one devil to cast out other devils. They who attach "final perseverance" to Conversion may be divided into three classes:—(1) They who affirm that after Conversion a man may sin, but it will not be sin to him, although in the case of an unconverted man the same thing would be sin. (2) They who believe that after Conversion it is impossible for a man to sin; that Conversion, in other words, ends a man's probation. (3) They who say that at Conversion all a man's sins, past, present, and future, are forgiven. The first position we have seen is clearly immoral; and the second and third are contrary to Holy Scripture. I need hardly dwell on the fact that there is no spiritual change referred to in the Bible which, if a man should once experience it, closes his probation, and secures to him Heaven. I was once discussing the third position with one who held it, and having pointed out various cases of men who fell away from God, and being invariably met by the answer, "He was never con-

verted," I at last quoted 1 S. John iii. 2: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." I asked, "Don't you think that those people were, as you say, savingly converted?" "Certainly," she replied. "Well," I said, "in this same letter to these same persons S. John writes, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'" (i. 8.) She paused for a minute, and then said, "Well, indeed if I had been at John's elbow when he was writing that I would just have told him he was making a mistake."

The teaching of God's Word is, not that when we turn to God we receive remission of our sins once for all, but that we are to come constantly "to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews xii. 24); for while we who have turned "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God," do not sin wilfully, yet "in many things we offend all." (S. James iii. 2.) And our serving God, by the influence and aid of the Holy Ghost, is laid down as a condition of our receiving daily, through the merits of Christ Jesus, pardon of these sins of imperfection and omission:—"If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship

one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth (*i.e.*, is cleansing) us from all sin." (1 S. John i. 7.)

If any man trusts, not in Jesus Christ, but in having passed, at one time of his life, through a crisis of Conversion let him hear the Scriptures, "I will put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." (S. Jude v. 5.) "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it." (Hebrews iv. 1.) S. Paul, long after his Conversion, writes to the Corinthians (1 Epistle ix. 27): "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." "But," says one who is determined to adjust Holy Scripture to his theory, "the Apostle means a castaway in regard to his works." Now, supposing this were so, and then supposing the Apostle had meant to speak of himself and not of his works, how would he have expressed his meaning?

IV. Another erroneous idea in regard to Conversion is that it is always sudden: it must be attended by certain portents and unmistakeable signs, else there is no genuineness in it. Now, does this accord with the

Bible, or with the experience of the majority of true Christians? Both the general tenor of Holy Scripture, and the spiritual history of the most pious men and women in all ages confirm that which is written, "There are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." (1 Corinthians xii. 6.) "There have been souls dedicated to Heaven from childhood, and guarded by good angels as sweet seclusions for holy thoughts, and prayers, and all good purposes"; souls that have never wickedly departed from God; who are unable to recall any time of their life when they were not endeavouring, through the Holy Spirit's help, to serve and please God, although with many imperfections; who have ever remained "a temple dedicated to Heaven, and, like the Pantheon at Rome, lighted only from above." Shall we say that because these cannot recall any spiritual convulsion in their religious life therefore they are cut off from the hope of salvation? To say so would be to damn the majority of God's saints in all ages. Others, again, having departed from the Sacramental Life of Baptism, yet not openly, but having become careless, have been convinced of sin by the Holy Spirit, have remembered from whence they had fallen, have come to Christ for pardon, and now rejoice in a renewed life. Shall we say that because they did not turn to God in a single day, that because

no portents attended their return to the Shepherd and Bishop of their souls, that therefore they never did return, and that they are not now walking in the narrow way which leads to Heaven? There are those who, with a strange want of charity and of faith in the manifold operations of the Holy Spirit, condemn every-one who has not been brought to God just in the same way as they themselves have been. I trust that you and I do not so limit God's Providence. It is written, "Neither doth God respect any person: yet doth He devise means that His banished be not expelled from Him." (2 Samuel xiv. 14.) And yet others there are, who at one time of their life deliberately turned their back upon God, and plunged into a life of profligacy and shame, until all desire for purity departed from them, until they would fain have filled themselves with the husks which the very swine refuse to eat, until there remained with them no fear of hell, no hope of Heaven: when, all at once as it seemed to them, the path to perdition was blocked by One "Whose visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men," even by Him with the pierced hands and feet, Who is "able to save to the uttermost." These know when they turned to God; they know when the stains of their past life were washed away by the blood of Jesus; they know when they began to

submit themselves to be guided and sanctified by the Spirit. But shall we affirm that theirs is the only true Conversion, theirs the only legitimate spiritual experience? Shall we dare to say that there is no salvation for any except those who openly depart from God, and are thus suddenly arrested at the gate of eternal death? God forbid.

I have referred to three distinct histories of the human soul; and you will find each of these exemplified in the Holy Bible.

Of the first class you have a Samuel, consecrated to God in his infancy, and in whose spiritual existence there was no crisis of Conversion; a John Baptist, filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother's womb; a Timothy, who from a child knew the Holy Scriptures which were able to make him wise unto salvation; and the majority of the saints of the Old Testament and of the New.

Of the second class you have a Lydia "whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken by Paul"; the Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so: therefore many of them believed."

Of the third class, strange as it may seem, it is more difficult to get examples which will bear the test of scrutiny than of the other two; for if you point to

instances in the New Testament of what would seem, according to the prevailing view, to be sudden Conversions, it is immediately perceived that these cases are not parallel to Conversions in our own day. They who at present convert suddenly to God have been baptized into the Church of Christ, and brought up in the faith of the Gospel, and then have openly broken away from God; but the sudden Conversions in the New Testament were of those who had been brought up in Judaism or Heathenism, and who, on hearing the Gospel, turned from the belief in which they had been educated: and, no doubt, there is a difference here which can neither be wholly ignored nor explained away. It is also to be noted that even if we accept the prevalent opinion, the sudden Conversions recorded in the New Testament were in every instance the result of a miracle, as the sound of a rushing mighty wind and the speaking with other tongues on the Day of Pentecost; the extraordinary brightness and the marvellous voice on the Damascus road; the earthquake at Philippi. The case of Saul of Tarsus as an instance of sudden Conversion is invalid for two reasons. (1) Your modern convert is one who has led a profligate life; Saul was not a profligate, but one who up to his Conversion lived before God in all good conscience. He did sin, but his sin was one of ignorance, "The light that led astray

was light from Heaven." (2) In the Scriptural sense, Saul turned to God when he was struck down on the Damascus road; in the popular sense, in which Conversion comprehends repentance, faith, turning to God, and pardon, Saul was not converted until three days later, during which time he was fasting and praying.

So far for the history of religious experience as recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, Christ, in speaking of the operations of religion in the soul, points us to the processes in the natural world as an example; and Nature would teach us that her beneficent results are as a rule worked out without commotion. How significant is the fall of the snow! You retire to rest some night with a last look at the earth lying bleak and bare beneath a murky moon. You awake next morning to see a mantle of purest white thrown over all. There has been no trembling of earthquake, nor sound of thunder: the work has been done silently and slowly. Or, in broad daylight you watch from your window the first few flakes descending through the wintry air, at first making no change on the outward aspect of things, being swallowed up by the muddy pools, or melted on the warm bosom of the earth, then increasing in volume and density until one by one the inky pools are filled with purity, and the landscape laughs to the setting sun, and the pines on the hill-side are covered with

pearls, and all the sounds of earth are stilled. There has been no blare of trumpet nor flying banner; but the work has been not less surely or perfectly performed. Not less silent, and not less gradual, is the work of Divine grace in many a human soul. How beautiful, too, is the advent of Spring, when "all the trees on all the hills open their thousand leaves." No less beautiful, and no less noiseless, is the change in many a life from the deadness of Winter to the freshness and vitality of Spring. "The Kingdom of God," says Christ, "cometh not with observation." It is like seed growing secretly, like leaven which works unobserved, like a small seed which in the course of many years grows into a great tree. God has His mysteries of grace, and is not tied by our poor rules. It is a mistake to recognize the working of His Holy Spirit only in convulsions of the soul. He speaks peace to the penitent, a peace which lasts, not so much in the exciting Mission as in the secluded chamber with Himself alone, not so much in the earthquake and tempest as in the quiet hours of meditation. "And, behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the Lord; but the Lord was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the Lord was not in the earthquake: and after the earthquake a fire; but the Lord was not in the fire:

and after the fire a still, small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave." (1 Kings xix. 11-13.) Let God speak to some, if He will, out of the whirlwind or the earthquake; to most of His penitent children He speaks in quiet, loving tones, with "a still small voice"—in some peaceful hour betwixt the day and night, in the gentle tones of spouse or child, in the recollected words of a mother so gentle and good, in the purity of one whom we loved and lost in early youth, amid the silence that is in the happy hills, in some passage of His written Word, in the conversation of a beloved friend, alone at the winter fire when recollections of the past crowd on the wearied brain, and

> "Old faces glimmer through the doors,
> Old footsteps tread the upper floors,
> Old voices call us from without."

Let us not, casting aside all Christian charity and confining God within our narrow limits, condemn others because their spiritual experience has been different from our own; and let us not doubt, although God may be speaking to us through circumstances and in tones different from those in which He speaks to others, that the meaning of His message is the same. The

question for each one of us is not, Have I turned to God in the same manner as others? but, Have I wandered from God? and if so, have I turned again?

V. Associated with the idea that Conversion is always sudden and attended by striking circumstances, there is the false notion that Conversion in the same sense is necessary for every one. I have already drawn attention to the fact that some of the most pious men and women have not passed through any crisis of Conversion in their spiritual life: they cannot recall any time when the Spirit of God was not striving with them, and when they were not endeavouring, although with many imperfections in God's sight, to follow the Holy Spirit's guidance. For these, Conversion, in the common acceptation of the term, is not necessary. Conversion for them would be turning from holiness to sin, from God to Satan, in the sense in which the word is used in Galatians iv. 9 and 2 S. Peter ii. 21, 22.

There are two verses, however, and only two out of the whole Bible, which are glibly quoted to prove that everyone must be converted. The first is S. John iii. 3: "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God." It is very unfortunate for those who interpret this verse as meaning Conversion, that there is no exhortation of this kind anywhere throughout the Epistles. If the new birth be the same as Conversion,

certainly many of those in the Churches to which Epistles were addressed required it, for there were sins existing among them which were a shame, even according to heathen morality. How strange, then, that none of the writers of the Epistles prescribes "the new birth" for such persons. How strange, if this verse refer to Conversion, that there is not a single exhortation in all the Epistles to people to "be born again." You do hear numbers of such exhortations addressed in this town to baptized persons, but not once in the New Testament. That the Apostles did not exhort those who had wandered from God to "be born again," but to turn again to the Lord, is easily understood if we remember that those who first read this verse in the Gospel according to S. John understood it to refer, not to Conversion, but to Baptism. And for hundreds of years universal Christendom referred the verse to Baptism. They may all have been wrong in refusing to confound "the new birth" with Conversion—all the Apostles, all the early Christians who first read the words in their own mother tongue, all the great army of saints and martyrs, all the millions of Christians in every quarter of the globe for centuries; and it may have been reserved for a few men in modern times to discover the true meaning, men who cannot read the New Testament in the

language in which it was written, but are at the mercy of the Translators under "THE MOST HIGH AND MIGHTY PRINCE JAMES": this *may* be so, but——

The other verse adduced to prove that an instantaneous Conversion is necessary for every one is our text, "Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." Does anyone mean to assert seriously that when these words were spoken to the Apostles they required Conversion in the ordinary sense of the term? If so, his ideas must be rather mixed. If you compare with this the parallel passages in the other Evangelists (S. Mark ix. 33 and S. Luke ix. 46), you will understand what is really the meaning of our text as addressed by Christ to the Twelve. There had been a dispute among them as to which of them should be greatest; and Christ in this verse tells them that except they turn from these dreams of ambition, and become as little children, content with their lot and station, they shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. To wrest the words from the context, and press them into the purpose of proving a sudden Conversion necessary for every one is to do as great violence to their orginal meaning as if you were to quote to a man about to commit an immoral act, "To the pure all things are pure." (Titus i. 15.)

From the teaching of Conversion in the popular

sense as necessary for all, several evils have resulted :—

1. Some make it an excuse for continuing in sin. If you reason with them about loving and serving God, they will answer, "How can I? I never have been converted?" If you study the whole of the New Testament, you will not find a single case like this taken into account. Read all the Epistles, and you will not find a single exhortation either to wait for some great change, or to make one supreme effort now, and bring yourself at once and for ever into loving connection with God. Rather is this the style of exhortation :—God loves you. He has sent His Son to redeem you. Of His free mercy He has called you into covenant-relationship with Himself. He has given you His Spirit to convince you of sin, to put into your mind the knowledge of what is right, and to aid you in doing it. If you have wandered from Him, return to Him Who is your loving Shepherd. Do not wait for some miracle in your spiritual life, but as God has given you the unspeakable gifts of His Son and of His Holy Spirit, begin to serve Him at once. "Walk as children of the light." "As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

2. As it is an excuse for some to continue in sin, so also does it produce in others a feeling of despair. They are told there is no salvation for them except they

have passed through a crisis of Conversion such as some have passed through; not being able to recollect any convulsion in their religious life, they look on themselves as abandoned by God and doomed to eternal death. Let such honest souls cast away from them these false ideas of Conversion, read the New Testament carefully, come daily in prayer to Christ for pardon, and use humbly those means which Christ Jesus has left for conveying to them His Grace, and as God is true they will come to know the peace of God which passeth all understanding, and receive strength to overcome temptation and to love and serve their Father Who is in Heaven.

3. While the doctrine that a sudden and signal Conversion is necessary for every man has produced in some a reign of despair, so it has bred in others a false sense of security. These being confident that at a particular time they "were converted," now persuade themselves that they are secure of eternal salvation no matter what the testimony of their heart and life may be. In some instances the lives of these men were not different after "Conversion" from what they had been before; in others there was a reformation for a time, and then a falling back again into carelessness or vice. In either case they flatter themselves that having "experienced Conversion" they are sure of eternal life.

If any of you who listen to me this evening be deceiving yourselves in this way, I would earnestly remind you that when the Lord, the Righteous Judge, shall appear it will be to "discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not." No empty profession of having been once "converted" will stand you in good stead in that day. Read when you go home the first chapter of S. Peter's Second Epistle, and note how the Apostle exhorts those to whom he writes to cultivate with all diligence faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly-kindness, charity, and then adds, "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." The question for each one of us is, not have we turned to God at some particular time of our life, but are we looking to Him now to save us from our sins.

Let us now see what we have learned from the Holy Scriptures on the subject of Conversion. We have learned not to use the word in a superstitious sense, nor alone, but to say, as the Bible does, what we mean by the word, as turning from evil, turning to God. We have learned not to use the word in a passive sense, as to be converted, but always in an active sense, as to convert, or to turn. We have learned that an

instantaneous and striking Conversion is not necessary for all, there being Samuels in the world as well as Sauls. We have learned that Conversion is not the beginning and the ending of the Christian life: that it does not sum up the whole of salvation.

Having now cleared away error, we are in a position to learn the truth as it is taught in the Word of God. Conversion in the Bible means the personal act of a man in turning from Satan to God, when moved to do so by the Holy Ghost.

Conversion is spoken of in the Bible in three different senses.

1. It means the action of people in renouncing Judaism or heathenism and accepting the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as in Acts iii. 19 and xv. 3.

2. It means the action of persons in turning from a life of wickedness to serve God, when moved thereto by the Holy Spirit, as in the passage quoted in the New Testament from Isaiah vi. 10.

3. It means the action of those who are living holy lives in turning constantly from temptation and everything evil, as in our text, S. Matthew xviii. 3, and S. Luke xxii. 31.

If we are really in earnest about our salvation it will not, I think, be difficult to settle between our own soul

and God to which of these classes we belong; and then we shall perceive what sort of Conversion we need.

Do not some of you belong to the second class? You have openly and impiously broken the terms of the Covenant into which you were introduced by Baptism; you have neglected the means of grace, you have ignored the privileges of the Gospel, and put away its promises from you; you have turned the back to God and not the face. Alas! where is there a congregation which does not contain some such? Do not say it is not your fault, that you can do nothing in the matter. You have chosen the evil, and you can choose the good. Christ Jesus has shed His precious blood to save your soul; He has embraced you with the arms of His mercy in His own Ordinance of Baptism; the Holy Ghost strives with you. It is now your part to convert from sin and turn to God, to ask forgiveness for the sake of His Beloved Son, and by His grace to lead a new life. When will you do so? You can do so to-day; it may be impossible to-morrow.

And who of us does not need Conversion in the last sense? Who of us does not need to convert from some infirmity of temper, some hard, unkind thought, some self-seeking spirit? Who of us would care to carry with us through all eternity our disposition just as it is at present?

Speaking to you in conformity with what we have learned from the Word of God, I do not ask you, Can you point to the place or the hour of your Conversion? but rather, Have you wandered from God; and, if so, have you converted from evil, and turned to God at any time? And are you now daily turning from some evil thought, temper, or temptation, and constantly learning more of the mind that is in Christ Jesus? This last is the test of your faith and piety, the test as to whether you are walking in newness of life.

However strictly you may judge yourselves, let me implore you as you hope for salvation to refrain from judging others. As God alone knows the hearts of men, He has reserved to Himself the province of judging others; and yet how many recklessly and impiously intrude into His province! Of those who have been walking in the fear of the Lord from their youth, I have heard people say, "They are not converted." "With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." (S. Matthew vii. 2.) "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, Who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts." (1 Corinthians iv. 5.)

The Witness of the Spirit.

IV.

The Witness of the Spirit.

ROMANS VIII. 16.

"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God."

THE subject we are to consider this evening is known by various titles, "The Doctrine of Assurance," "The Witness of the Spirit," "The Knowledge of Sins Forgiven." The importance of the subject may be greatly exaggerated, and actually has been so since the close of the last century. Since that time the phase of religion which has most obtained amongst the masses has been decidedly subjective; the general tendency of much religious teaching has been, not to direct the penitent to Jesus as the source of peace, but to make him look within himself and find it there. If one may judge by what he hears from "evangelists," so called, he will conclude that the chief object of the Gospel is not to save men from their sins, but to get them to believe that their sins are forgiven. You take up many tracts and religious pamphlets, the whole subject-matter of which is, not how men may

glorify God, but how they may know of a surety that they are accepted with Him. An extreme phase of this has appeared lately: many people display a great anxiety to know, not if their own sins are forgiven, but if yours are.

But if many run into this extreme, is that any proper reason why we should ignore the subject entirely? Too many strong minds do so, and live to regret it. You may put this subject away from you, as one of little importance; you may jog along in your course of life content to be as other men; but a day may come when all this will be changed. Should it please God, instead of calling you suddenly before His bar, to lay you for a time on a bed of sickness, this matter will then present itself to you in its due proportions. However you may put the question away from you now, it will then come to you in all its dread reality—"Whither am I going: to Paradise, or to torment? to be with Christ, or to be with the devil and his angels? Am I under the favour of God, or rejected of Him and eternally lost?" Ah! that is indeed a dreadful scene when life is fast ebbing away; when an unprepared soul is being loosed from its old moorings and is drifting, drifting, helplessly, hopelessly outwards on an angry, boundless ocean; when everything that once seemed stable, that once seemed all in all, is fleeting

away into the nothingness of empty space and hollow sky; when all that once was familiar and beloved is fading into night; when nothing that once was trusted is left to cling to; when the tempest rages, and the waves lift up their voices, and "darkness that may be felt" broods over the deep, and no word is heard to encourage, no hand held out to be grasped in the gloom, while the soul is forced to go forth alone to make acquaintance with the Unknown.

I am aware that some die careless as they lived, boasting themselves no worse than their neighbours; and their case is the most hopeless of all. In most instances, however, the near approach of death awakens a man from his spiritual lethargy, and brings serious and searching thoughts. Is it not better and wiser for us, while we have health and means of grace, to consider our relation to God, to examine ourselves if we be in the faith, to try and find out our state before God rather than put the question away from us until Eternity looms in sight? I am anxious to place before you this evening certain rules by which you may examine yourselves, so that you may not be deceived by excitement, and that the day of death may not find you unprepared.

Perhaps we cannot do better than follow the method which we adopted last Sunday evening when considering Conversion—clear away the rubbish in order that we

may see the fair structure of Truth. "Many false prophets are gone out into the world" to preach and teach on this subject. I have in past years taken all pains to find out what the popular theory on this question is. I have sometimes when travelling in a railway carriage listened to one person explaining the subject to others, and impressing on them the "necessity of feeling their sins forgiven." I was greatly astonished on all such occasions to hear certain theories put forward as if they were infallibly true, without any Scriptural proof advanced to support them. Indeed, one might have supposed from such conversations that there was no Bible in existence, for there was not a single reference to it. The theories I have heard put forward may be summed up under three heads.

I. The way in which the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God is by a special and instantaneous illumination. According to this position God was far away from us until we endeavoured to draw nigh to Him. He did not love us first, we loved Him; He did not seek us first, we sought Him. There was no connection between God and us until we passed through the crisis of conversion. According to this theory also there is no hope of salvation for those who have never let go the pierced hand

of Christ which grasped theirs in infancy—the only hopeful spiritual history is that of the Prodigal Son. To be saved at all a man must become a notorious evil liver, and then, under some stirring evangelistic address (never by the quiet reading of God's own Word), sudden conviction seizes him, he cries to God for mercy, and then all at once a great illumination of the Holy Spirit comes upon him, and an ecstasy of joy fills his mind.

The text I have chosen is quoted in proof of this theory of sudden illumination; but it is to be noted that what the verse says is that the Spirit bears witness *with* our spirit, not *to* our spirit. There are two witnesses mentioned in the verse, the Holy Ghost and our own spirit; and these two witnesses agree.

II. This signal illumination is supplemented by feeling. Feeling, according to many, is the only test of a man's state before God. "Do you *feel* you are saved?" That is the popular form of the question.

Let me direct your attention to this question, and first of all to the use of the word "saved." I remember on one occasion, after I had preached in a church in Dublin, a gentleman followed me into the vestry, and said, "Do you mean to tell us that when a man is converted he's not saved?" Some time after my questioner was forced to fly the country; but I have no doubt, from my experience of others of his class, that he still

flattered himself that he was "saved" for all that. By this misuse of the word saved many deceive themselves and lose their souls. Professing or believing that they have done one act, or experienced one sensation, which assures them they are saved for ever; and not knowing or seeking any other salvation than this, they go out again into the hard, eye-for-an-eye, tooth-for-a-tooth world, without showing in their conduct that they are saved from any of those sins from which it is the glory and characteristic of the Religion of Jesus to save us. They are not a whit less proud, less passionate, less bitter, less avaricious; not a whit more abundant in almsgiving, more charitable, more kind-hearted, more courteous, more gentle, more humble, more merciful than before. Ask their families what they are at home—if more patient, more loving, more thoughtful of others, less bad-tempered, less selfish. Do you not know such people, who, with all their declarations of being "saved," are no more than moral, exhibit in their daily round of duty none of the traits of Christ's character? It is not our province to judge such men; we leave them to the mercy of God; but a terrible warning is given them in the case of the Unmerciful Servant, who, after he had been forgiven, was delivered over to the tormentors, because he did not use rightly the pardon granted him. Men think they can sin thus with impunity from the

unscriptural meaning which they attach to the word saved. Salvation with them is not the work of a life, but the work of a moment. It will bring any of them who understand plain English to reason, if when they put to you the stereotyped question, "Do you feel you are saved?" you ask them, *Saved from what?* It is written, "Thou shalt call His Name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins," but evidently this is not the idea these people have of salvation.

Salvation is spoken of in the Bible in a past sense, in a present sense, and in a future sense. It is spoken of the past, in the sense of bringing us into covenant with God (Titus iii. 5): "He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." It is used in a present sense, of that which is going on now (1 Corinthians i. 18): "For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved (Greek, *being saved*) it is the power of God." It is used of the future, of that which is not yet finished or complete (S. Matthew x. 22): "He that endureth to the end shall be saved"; (Romans xiii. 11) "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

Come now to another word in the conventional question, "Do you feel you are saved?"—the word "feel." "If you do not feel you are saved," I have often heard one person say to another, "you are lost." Now in

reference to this theory of feeling we may ask, Is not the Gospel good news, and can that be the Gospel which has made so many infidels, so many spiritual hypochondriacs, which has produced so much misery and despair, and has unseated the reason of so many? I have seen one strong man driven out of his mind by this theory of feeling, with the cry on his lips of spiritual desertion; I would not like to see another. It rouses all one's indignation to read of those cases of melancholy madness produced by this false doctrine; it claims all one's powers to put down the heresy by the substitution of the truth. What seems absolutely fiendish in a certain class of tract and religious biography is that the spiritual demonstrators exult over their victim as an anatomist would over a subject exhibiting marks of his favourite theory. The more exquisite the sufferings of the religious patient, the more the authors rejoice over him, as if his soul were to be saved by the agonies endured. You cannot misconstrue my words if I refer you to the poet Cowper as an example of what I mean. "What a noble mind was there overthrown" by this theory of feeling. Biography contains nowhere the record of a more innocent character, of more unostentatious piety, yet was he during a great part of his life plunged in religious horror. I know of nothing sadder in all psychological history than the last lines

he ever wrote, "The Castaway," in which he draws a distressing parallel between one who fell overboard and was lost at sea and himself cast off by Heaven.

"No voice divine the storm allayed,
No light propitious shone,
When, snatched from all effectual aid,
We perished, each alone;
But I beneath a rougher sea,
And whelmed in deeper gulfs than he."

How one wishes that somebody had been near him to point him to the practical passages in God's Word on this subject, to get his mind away from a gloomy religion, and remind him of the confession in the Creed, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins."

It is curious to notice that high views of conversion and feeling began to prevail at the same time in Germany as here; but there they produced more disastrous results in the way of infidelity. It is very touching to read the autobiography of Semler, a German theologian, in relation to this. Of the convictions of his boyhood he writes: "There was not a corner of the house in which, for secrecy, I did not kneel, pouring out many tears, and crying to God for this great grace of conversion. Well do I remember that one evening, walking all alone in the large square of the Orphanage, I said to myself, in the deepest distress, 'Oh! that I were that lump of ice, or that log!'"

Here you have an example of the evil results of the doctrine I have referred to—that God stands far off from us, that He does not love us, nor treat us in any sense as His children, until we make some tremendous effort, and pass through a great convulsion of the soul. Semler's history might have been different from what it was had there been someone to take him by the hand and show him what is written in the Word of God, and point out to him the style of exhortation in the Epistles —that God has loved us with an everlasting love, that in His love and in His pity He redeemed us, that He has brought us into His Church, "not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy"; that He has "called us to be saints," and that what He requires of us is, not to wait for greater things than these, but to begin at once to serve Him and love Him with our whole heart, continually trusting in the merits of Christ, and submitting ourselves to His holy will and pleasure. Poor Semler, not being able to feel exactly as some other pious people, or experience that conversion, without which he was taught he must be lost, ended in free-thinking. He still, indeed, retained belief in some books of the Bible; his life was blameless and beautiful; and to the last he was as stout an opponent of bare Deism as of mere subjective religion and pietism. And numbers suffer in the same way:

they become tired of all this talk and writing about feeling, and, running into the other extreme, their religion becomes altogether ineffective, a religion without consolation and without Christ.

Bring this theory of special revelation and feeling to the test of God's Word Written. Most of you have got "Cruden's Concordance to the Holy Scriptures." Take it up when you go home; count the number of times the words "feel" and "feeling" occur in the whole Bible. The result will surprise those of you who hear it constantly affirmed that "if you do not *feel* your sins forgiven, you are in a lost condition." You will find the words "feel" and "feeling" used very seldom in the Bible, and never once in the popular sense. This does not decide the whole question, but it does decide the use of the words.

Bring the theory of feeling, again, into the domain of practice, and you will discover that it will not stand as the sole test of our state before God. To-day you rejoice in the sweet habitude of being, your pulse dances to a joyous strain, all the elements of your nature are "kindly mixed" and tuned to harmony, "a hidden hope" nestles in your bosom, an indescribable calm descends upon your spirit from the blue heaven above you bent, an impalpable peace sleeps upon the earth "like tired eyelids upon tired eyes": and your

heart melts in adoration, and your head is bowed in gratitude; and prayer is a comfort to you, and public worship a delight, and the reading of God's Word a solace; and in an ecstasy of soul you exclaim—

> "Joy, joy for ever, my task is done,
> The gates are passed, and Heaven is won."

But on the morrow there "comes the check, the change, the fall"; something in your domestic or worldly affairs has gone wrong, and jars this sensitive nature of yours into disorder; or the wind has changed to the east, and every nerve in your frame seems as if made for agony; and prayer is no more to you than a duty, and God does not seem to speak to you in His Word, and the heavens above seem as brass to your aspirations.

Now, if you judge by feeling alone you will conclude on the one day that you are a child of God and heir of eternal life, and on the next that you are a prey to the worm that never dies, and the fire that never is quenched; although on the one day you have been endeavouring to serve God as fervently as on the other. Feelings depend on so many things; they are at the mercy of so many causes which are known to us, and of so many more which are unknown, that we cannot always depend on them.

Besides this, it must be evident to all persons of experience that feelings alone are not a sure index of the state of the soul. There are persons who can weep copious tears in an excited meeting, and yet go out on the morrow to live the same bad life as before.

III. Another phase of false teaching on this subject may be stated thus:—The way in which the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God is by inspiring us with a sense of security. If you ask the upholders of this position what is the first necessary condition of salvation, they will answer, "Confidence." And what is the second? "Confidence." And what is the third? Still they answer, "Confidence." "Believe you are saved, and you are saved," sums up their Gospel. A curious doctrine this, that the evidence of our acceptance with God depends on the strength of our conviction that we are accepted. Confidence in Christ is one thing; confidence in self quite another. Humility, and not confidence, is represented in the Bible as a grace of the Christian character; but they who have confidence in themselves are generally sadly lacking in humility and in charity towards others. They will allege that they are "converted," and that such and such other people (who, as far as man can judge, are serving God at least as faithfully as they) are "unconverted." The censorious old woman

in the story is a type of these. One day she was speaking confidently of her own salvation, and depreciating the chances of her neighbours, whereupon a person present said to her, "I really think you believe that nobody in the congregation will get to Heaven except yourself and the Minister." "Weel, indeed," she said, "simtimes a' hae mae doots aboot the Meenester."

Confidence, instead of being an evidence of the possession of Divine grace, is too often a sign of the want of it. Confidence is by no means a sure test. Read our Lord's account of the Last Judgment in S. Matthew xxv. It is those who are confident who are on the left hand.

Having now disposed of the doctrines of men, we are in a position to learn the truth as taught in the Holy Scriptures.

In what sense are we to understand "children of God" in the text? The term is used in four senses in the Bible. (1) It refers to those who are the sons of God by creation. In this sense, as including all mankind, it is used by S. Paul in his address to the Areopagus of Athens. (Acts xvii. 26-29.) (2) It is applied to all who are within the Covenant of God—to all Jews in the Old Testament, and to all baptized persons in the New. Deuteronomy xiv. 1: "Ye are the children of the Lord your God." Galatians iii. 26, 27: "Ye are all the

children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (3) Some of the last class are good children, and some are "rebellious," "impudent," "disobedient"; therefore we find the title, "children of God," given to those who have not merely been brought into the Church of God, but who walk in some sense worthy of their calling. S. Matthew v. 9, and 44, 45: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in Heaven." 1 S. John iii. 10: "In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." (4) The title, "sons of God," or "children of God," is bestowed on those who are faithful unto death, and receive a crown of life. S. Luke xx. 35, 36: "They which shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry, nor are given in marriage: neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection."

It is in the third sense the words are used in the

text, as referring to those who are the obedient children of God. Can these dutiful children know that God has accepted them in Christ Jesus, and that He is well pleased with them? This brings me to state one of my main propositions in this lecture :—In every age and dispensation it has been the privilege of those who walked worthy of their vocation to know that they were accepted with God and were heirs of eternal life. Turn to Hebrews xi. 4, and read, "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts : and by it he being dead yet speaketh." Mark these words, "*By which he obtained witness that he was righteous.*" They prove that in the first generation after the Fall there was a possibility of a man's knowing that he was accounted righteous before God. Go on to the next verse, "By Faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; and was not found, because God had translated him : for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." These words, "*Before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God,*" show that in the seventh generation after our first parents there was a possibility that a good man should know that God was pleased with him. Come now to the time when the chosen nation was settled in the Land of Promise, and you find David

writing, in the Thirty-second Psalm, "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." "I acknowledged my sin unto Thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." How could David address God and say, "Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin," if he did not know that God had forgiven him? Come to the New Testament, and you have the declaration of our Blessed Lord, "I am the Good Shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." (S. John x. 14.) S. Paul writes to the Corinthians in his Second Epistle (v. 1): "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." S. John writes in his First Epistle (iii. 2): "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." And in our text S. Paul writes, "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."

I think I have now proved my proposition, that in every Dispensation it has been a privilege of good men to know that God accepted them and pardoned their sins.

How did they know this? What was the evidence which satisfied them? How does the Holy Spirit bear witness with our spirit that we are the children of God?

In proceeding to answer this question, let me point out to you the difference between the language used by the sacred writers in the passages I have cited, and that of the teachers of the false doctrines which I have been combatting. These "false prophets" speak of "feeling" that you are accepted with God: the inspired writers speak of "knowing" it. "We *know* that if the earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved"; "We *know* that we shall be like Him"; "I know My sheep, and am *known* of Mine"; "We *know* that we have passed from death unto life." This difference in language involves a difference in doctrine.

I have already shown that feeling alone is not a sure test of our state before God, for feelings, under the same spiritual conditions, are not always the same; some people, moreover, are of a phlegmatic nature, and cannot feel as acutely as others, either on religion or any other matter, while the feelings of others can be

kindled into enthusiasm or melted into pity without any permanent result on their character or conduct. The late Mr. Spurgeon recognized that some other test besides feeling was necessary. A young girl went to him and told him she had "been converted," and dwelt on the great happiness she now enjoyed. Mr. Spurgeon said it was a great blessing to feel happy, but, after all, happiness was hardly the chief characteristic of the most holy men who had ever lived. "Can you tell me," he asked, "anything in which your life is different since conversion from what it was before?" The girl was a domestic servant, and, after a minute's thought, she answered, "I sweep under the rugs now." "That will do," said Mr. Spurgeon, "I have no doubt of the reality of your conversion."

But while it will not do to judge by feeling alone, feeling is not to be excluded as evidence. A religion which would consist wholly in feeling would not be the religion of Christ, but superstition and sentimentalism; and on the other hand, a religion wholly devoid of feeling would not be the religion of Christ, but mere morality. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." And while peace is partly objective, between us and God, it is also partly subjective, in our soul—"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts

and minds through Christ Jesus." Peace is partly a feeling, and this is one way in which the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, by filling our hearts with peace. The Holy Spirit pours into our hearts the peace of God, our own spirit recognizes it, and in this way the Holy Spirit bears witness together with our spirit that we are the sons of God. Again, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind, and thy neighbour as thyself." Love is a feeling, and if we examine ourselves by the Holy Spirit's aid and find that we really do love God and our fellow-men, this is an evidence that we are the obedient children of God and heirs of eternal life. Joy is also frequently mentioned in the New Testament as a possession of the true Christian. And certainly if we are not "walking in the comfort of the Holy Ghost," we are not in the possession of our full Christian privilege.

But feelings, as I have said, are not always the same under the same spiritual conditions, and we have therefore another criterion given in the New Testament by which we may try ourselves, namely, our conduct:—"Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments." (1 S. John ii. 3.) To put the matter practically:—Suppose there comes one of those

dull days "when the fire will neither burn on the hearth nor in the heart, and all without and within is cheerless, and cold, and sad," we should examine ourselves, whether we have been serving God with the same fidelity as at other times. If we find we have been, we can refuse to allow our feelings to dominate our judgment. If we find we have not been doing so, we can come to Him Who has promised, "Him that cometh to Me, I will in no wise cast out."

The one class of evidence is incomplete without the other—the evidence of the heart and that of the life must ever go together. The one kind of evidence merges in the other. If, for example, we are examining ourselves whether we love God and our fellow-men, we shall naturally ask ourselves how this love is shown in our life; what are we doing to show this love towards God and towards our neighbour? "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." If we test ourselves humbly and sincerely by these, we can hardly deceive ourselves.

The measure of our assurance must never be such as to exclude hope, for hope is a Christian grace, and should have its place in the spiritual economy; but it may be such as to calm all fears and give us consolation and strength.

There are some who go farther than this, and say that if you do not possess this full assurance you are not heirs of eternal life. With the knowledge I have of the Bible, and of the lives of some of the most holy men and women of a naturally melancholy temperament, I dare not say that. S. John, in his First Epistle, writes: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life." (v. 13.) S. John here says distinctly that his object in writing this letter to faithful believers is *that they may know that they have eternal life.* If this knowledge invariably accompanied trust in Christ, there would have been no necessity that the Apostle, according to his own statement, should write this Epistle.

To any of you who are trusting humbly in the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, who do justice and love mercy, but are still not able to rejoice in God your Saviour as others do, I would commend the following words of Bishop Bull:—"Let us carefully mind our duty which the Word of God hath laid before us, and then leave our comfort to our good and gracious God, Who will certainly dispense it in such measure as He sees best and fittest for us. There is many a one who might have been in a much more comfortable state of mind than he is, if he had minded his comfort less and

his duty more; if he had studied more the pleasing of God than the pleasure, peace, and satisfaction of his own mind; if he had laboured more to be a true, obedient child of God, than to know that he is so. Do not, therefore, as the manner of some is, lie down whining and crying for comfort and assurance, in the meanwhile neglecting thy duty; but rise up in the name and strength of God, and set thyself in good earnest to thy duty; honestly study to know and do the will of God; take heed of defiling thy conscience with any wilful sin; call upon God for His grace by constant and daily prayer; and in this way of well-doing commit thy soul to the goodness and mercy of God in Christ Jesus; and whilst thou do so, be assured thou art safe, and canst never miscarry. For it is as certain that God is good and gracious, as that He is, and that therefore He will never cast off those who thus cast themselves upon Him. Remember that ordinarily an abundant comfort is the reward of a fruitful piety, and therefore endeavour to 'grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

"In a word, persist and persevere in thy duty, and thou canst not fail of that comfort which is convenient for thee; and to be sure, what is wanting in thy joy and comfort here, shall with infinite advantage be made up hereafter, in that fulness of joy and

those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore."

"And now, little children, abide in Him; that when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." (1 S. John ii. 28.)

The Communion of Saints.

V.

The Communion of Saints.

EPHESIANS III. 15.

"The whole family in Heaven and earth."

ON some of the subjects which we have discussed in these Lectures many people have false ideas; on the subject of the Communion of Saints most people have no definite ideas at all. Now it is surely an awful thing to use sacred words without attaching to them any distinct idea, and at least on each Sunday we are in the habit of repeating these words in the Creed, "I believe in the Communion of Saints." I cannot hope to explain the subject in one Lecture so that everyone may grasp it in all its details, but I hope to throw so much light on it that the words in the Creed will not be altogether meaningless to any-one present this evening.

The word "saints" means simply "holy ones"—persons consecrated to a sacred service. In the New Testament the word is applied to all who are baptized, as all these were considered as called of God to be holy.

In Christian literature the word soon came to mean persons pre-eminent in holiness; those who excelled others in piety and virtue; those who had crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts; those who had most thoroughly freed themselves by the grace of God from selfishness, and had most successfully cultivated kindness and charity; those who had been most resigned to do and to suffer all the will of God; those who had most closely copied the example of Jesus in self-denial and doing good to others. Who are the saints? On earth they were not marked out from other men by any peculiarity of dress or manner, but only by the purity of their lives. There was no outward badge or sign by which they might be known. You may see in old pictures a halo around their head, but no halo distinguished them when they walked among men, save that of a holy conversation. They were not apart from their fellow-men in the outward circumstances of their lives; some of them were wealthy, some of them were in want; some of them inhabited a palace, some of them occupied a prison; some lived in times of persecution, some in times of peace. But however diverse may have been their lot in life, they were all one in hungering and thirsting after righteousness, in mercifulness, in purity of heart. It is a solemn and encouraging thought that such men lived on the earth, "of whom the world was

not worthy," men of like passions with ourselves, who conquered the same temptations against which we now fight, conquered them in the strength of the same Captain of Salvation, under Whose banner we still go out to war.

"O, though oft depressed and lonely,
All my fears are laid aside,
If I but remember only
Such as these have lived and died."

It is encouraging to remember that such as these have lived and died, and to reflect on what is revealed to us in Holy Writ, that in a sense they are with us still, that although no more seen by us they surround our path, and as a great cloud of witnesses watch with intense sympathy how we are running the race that is set before us. (Hebrews xii. 1.) It is also encouraging to think that some such are still with us in the flesh, for the Communion of Saints comprises "the great company of the noble living and the noble dead." As Charles Wesley wrote—

"One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death."

What is the nature of the Communion of Saints?

The Bible represents it as something spiritual, real, and intimate. In the New Testament various figures of speech are used to show the intimacy of the communion between God and His saints, and of the saints one with another.

1. Our Blessed Lord employs the metaphor of a tree to show forth the Communion of Saints. "I am the Vine, ye are the branches." (S. John xv. 5.) The union existing between true Christians is the same close union as there is between the branches of a tree.

2. S. Paul represents the Communion of Saints under the figure of a building. The Church of Christ is a temple; Christians are the living stones of which this temple is built; the Apostles and Prophets are the foundation, and Jesus Christ is the chief corner-stone. Christians are as closely connected with one another as are the stones in a building. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone; in Whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians ii. 19-21.)

3. Nothing can exceed the closeness of the Communion of Saints as represented by S. Paul when he calls the Church the Body of Christ, and tells us that

we are members of that Body. Let me recall some of the passages in which this metaphor is found. Ephesians i. 22: "And gave Him (Christ) to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His Body." 1 Corinthians xii. 13: "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free." And in the same chapter at the twenty-seventh verse it is written, "Ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular."

4. The Communion of Saints is also shown forth in the New Testament under the figure of citizenship. All Christians are citizens of one place. I have already quoted one passage in which this is found, and another is Philippians iii. 20: "Our conversation (*i.e.*, citizenship) is in Heaven."

5. The figure which is used in our text to represent the Communion of Saints is a family: "For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of Whom the whole family in Heaven and earth is named," *i.e.*, exists. Here angels and archangels, the departed saints and those amongst us still, are represented as one family, united together, with God as their Father.

We take a step onward, and say that this communion is not broken by death; in other words, there is com-

munion between the saints on earth and those in Paradise. We must believe this, except we be prepared to throw the Bible aside, and to deny the consciousness of the soul between death and the resurrection. If it is true that the saints having communion with God through Christ have also communion one with another, it follows that this communion is not broken by death. Those who have departed this life God has taken nearer to Himself, and if we are Christ's, they are in a spiritual, and that the truest, sense nearer us than when they were upon earth. All mists are cleared away from before their face, and if any misunderstanding existed between them and us, they now see us as we are, and if we are true men, they are drawn to us accordingly.

We have the sure Word of God that the Communion of Saints is not interrupted by death. In the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews the departed saints are spoken of as if crowding the sides of an amphitheatre, and watching with the most intense interest how we struggle on the arena of this earth: "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." In the previous chapter the writer of the Epistle had

spoken of the many who had triumphed through faith, and now he tells us those holy men and women are not dead, but alive; they are around us, and watch how we comport ourselves in the struggle. In the twenty-second and twenty-third verses of this twelfth chapter he affirms with emphasis the communion which exists between the saints on earth and those within the veil—"Ye are come unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and Church of the firstborn, which are written in Heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

What is affirmed here is not that when we die we shall "come to the spirits of just men made perfect," but being united to God through Christ we have communion with "the happy dead" already. That death does not destroy the Communion of Saints is also taught in the image used in our text, "the whole family in Heaven and earth." The Apostle does not speak of the family in Heaven *and* the family on earth; but the family in Heaven and earth—they constitute one family.

No; the Communion of Saints is not interrupted by death. The friend you mourn and miss daily, is he not with Christ, which is far better? United to Christ, is

he not also united to you? The little child whose golden head you laid to rest years ago in God's acre, has not the same Good Shepherd Who leads you to the green pastures and beside the still waters taken her to His bosom? Do not the same angels who minister to you lead her gently by the hand through the quiet cloisters of Paradise?

How may the Communion of Saints be cultivated? A general answer will be—By everything which brings us nearer to God in Christ and to one another. We may see how the Communion of Saints may be cultivated by the life of our Lord on earth; His use of Holy Scripture; His retirement to pray to the Father; His assembling with others in public worship; His observance of the Passover and other feasts of the Church of God; His associating with His disciples and with the family at Bethany, and His going to the marriage at Cana in Galilee.

Every good man has experienced more or less the Communion of Saints, although many might find a difficulty in defining what it is. Everyone has felt it when in the secrecy of his chamber he has poured out his soul to God in prayer; has felt himself in near communion with God, and through Him with all worshipping the same God, whether they be here on earth or passed out of mortal sight. Who has not at some

such time of private prayer passed through moments when the Beatific Vision seemed close on being realized, when the veil of flesh hardly seemed to separate him from the spirits of just men made perfect, and of the angels rejoicing with him?

The Communion of Saints! Everyone has enjoyed it when he has entered with his whole soul into the public worship of Almighty God; when, joined to the people of God in one holy faith, he and they have united with one mind and one mouth in glorifying God. Then when the same petitions, in the very same words, went up from every heart, when the same joyous song of praise arose with every voice, he has felt himself one with God, one with the great congregation, one with his brethren in far-off lands, one with the holy angels veiling their faces before the throne, one with all those who have passed into that land where prayer is turned into praise. Especially in that Service ordained by Christ Himself, pre-eminently called the Communion, he has experienced this ecstatic union. The words of inspiration which he remembers are to him no empty sounds—"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the Communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread and one body, for we all are partakers of that one bread." And

when he hears the words, "Therefore with angels and archangels, and with all the company of Heaven, we laud and magnify Thy Holy Name," he feels it an accomplished fact that the whole family in Heaven and earth have communion with one God and with one another.

The Communion of Saints! Every holy man has entered into it when far from home and friends; on the lofty mountain's pinnacle, whence he could see the wide sweep of the billowy plain below, and afar, fringing the horizon, the snowy peaks lifting themselves into the clear, bright heaven, like white-robed angels guarding him round: that height has been to him like the top of Pisgah to the prophet, from which he could view the Promised Land. Amid the silence of ancient woods, in the depths of the trackless forest, he is not alone, for the Father is with him, and in that Father's love he knows that he is united to his brethren in Heaven and earth; angels minister to him; voices of the living and the dead call to him, bidding him work while it is called to-day, and to suffer, if it be the will of God, and so be strong. On stormy seas he has still this same communion of saints. Friends he knows are uniting in prayer for his safety, and over the billows, however angry, there walks the Form of Him Who stilled the waves on the Lake of Galilee. You may remember

how William Makepeace Thackeray having described a stormy night at sea closes thus his tale—

"And when, its force expended,
The harmless storm was ended,
And as the sunrise splendid
Came blushing o'er the sea,
I thought, as day was breaking,
My little girls were waking,
And smiling, and making
A prayer at home for me."

The Communion of Saints! Every good man enjoys it amidst a holy companionship—among those to whom he can open the secrets of his heart. In the shadowy twilight, or by the winter fire, when those "thoughts that wander through eternity" find struggling expression, when reminiscences of bygone times are recalled "and other days come back again with recollected music," when soul grows nearer to soul, when every word has a sympathetic listener and is re-echoed from the depths of another's consciousness, "when thought leaps out to wed with thought ere thought can wed itself with speech": then he knows something of what those blessed evenings in the home of Bethany must have been, and he has a foretaste of what the Communion of Saints shall be when the whole family of God shall be gathered together where there shall be no more parting and no more pain.

And even should no earthly companionship offer itself in such still holy hours, the good man nevertheless enjoys the Communion of Saints.

"Then the forms of the departed
Enter at the open door;
The belovèd, the true-hearted
Come to visit me once more;

He, the young and strong, who cherished
Noble longings for the strife,
By the roadside fell and perished,
Weary with the march of life!

They, the holy ones and weakly,
Who the cross of suffering bore,
Folded their pale hands so meekly,
Spake with us on earth no more!"

Let me reduce what I have said to a portable form. The Communion of Saints may be cultivated (1) By intercourse with pious companions. (2) By private prayer, for so we get nearer God, and as a consequence nearer to one another. (3) By public worship, especially the Holy Communion. (4) By lonely meditation. (5) By commemoration.

For this last, commemoration of the saints of God, some provision is made in our Book of Common Prayer in the Services for Saints' Days. But to make the Communion of Saints as comforting and effective as Christ would have it, we must go beyond this, and

study the lives of those holy men and women who have lived since the Canon of the New Testament was closed. Ancient Ecclesiastical History and modern Biography of the best sort furnish a long enough list from which to choose. Where is there, indeed, a parish, asks one, where is there a family, which does not contain the record of some saintly life? In choosing a holy life on which to meditate we should be guided by our circumstances, our disposition, our wants. If we are inclined to sloth and selfishness, we should read of such saints as Bishop Patteson, who endured hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. If we are tempted with doubts, we should meditate on such men as Charles Kingsley, and Robertson of Brighton, and see how they fought their doubts and gathered strength. If we are persecuted for the truth's sake, we should study the lives of the martyrs, so that, like S. Stephen, we may learn to pray for our murderers. "If we are ready to follow, Christ through the Spirit sent in His Name, will guide us to someone in whom we may study the virtue of His Presence."

It is a utilitarian age, and men will ask, What is the good of this doctrine? I think that no one can have listened to the lecture of this evening, imperfect as it is, without knowing something of the comfort, the sense of companionship, and the strength to be gained from the

Communion of Saints. This communion, if rightly cultivated, must have a purifying effect on our lives. To think of the holy lives which those who have gone before us have led will nerve us to keep our garments unspotted by the flesh; to think that the blessed dead are around us will make us shrink back with shame from any impure act or unholy word.

The sense of this communion also will lead us to avoid offences towards the living, and not merely that, but remembering always that "we are members one of another," it will lead us to cultivate forbearance, courtesy, kindness. How pleasant it is to look back on an intercourse of years, especially if the person has gone beyond the reach of our voice, neither vexed by any misunderstanding nor jarred by any hasty word. Mutual help and mutual sympathy, loving actions and kind words, these will be the fruit of realizing the Communion of Saints. And then I need not dwell on how inspiriting this communion is; but ask you to read the eleventh and twelfth chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews. What is there revealed to us will impart to us strength in the evil day.

> "And when the strife is fierce, the warfare long,
> Steals on the ear the distant triumph-song,
> And hearts are brave again and arms are strong."

By cultivating the Communion of Saints we shall

have a sense of companionship when alone, when in difficulty, or danger, or affliction. And all this will increase our gratitude to God, as we remember that it all comes from Him, through the merits of Christ, and by the power of the Holy Ghost. And then our communion with the blessed dead, how the thought of it will soothe the parting at death. There may be a moment, indeed, when in the first sharp agony of our bereavement the lacerated heart cries in spite of itself—

> "Communion in spirit! Forgive me,
> But I, who am earthly and weak,
> Would give all my incomes from dreamland
> For a touch of her hand on my cheek."

But soon in calmness the Christian thought will conquer that they who have gone beyond our touch are not dead, but alive; that they are near to Christ, and consequently near to us; that they have only taken a step "into the outer air, out of a tent already luminous with light that shines through its transparent walls," and that we, if faithful, shall soon join them where we shall enjoy more fully the Communion of Saints. It is related of two friends, that when one of them was about to start for India they went out to take their last walk together before parting. In the course of their walk they came to a bridge which seemed a natural spot for saying good-bye. But just then they happened

to be engaged in a friendly discussion, during which they amused themselves by dropping straws into the stream from one parapet of the bridge and watching them reappear from the other. After twenty years the Indian returned and called on his old friend. Again they took the old familiar walk together, and when they came to the bridge where they had parted, they began unconsciously dropping straws into the stream just as they had done twenty years before. And as one of them unconsciously began, "But I think you must take into account," resuming the old discussion, with equal unconsciousness the other took up the interrupted thread of the argument. And so, I think, when, after years, we join our friends in the other world, we shall take up some of those conversations cut short by death—conversations in which on earth we enjoyed the Communion of Saints.

The Sin of Schism.

VI.

The Sin of Schism.

ROMANS XVI. 17, 18.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple."

UR subject for this evening is the Sin of Schism. It is not as pleasant a subject to dwell on as some others with which we have dealt in these Lectures; but let us hope that it will not be less profitable than any of them. If I followed my own predilections in preaching I would never speak of any particular sin; but in that case I should not be declaring "all the counsel of God."

Cain, when his sacrifice was rejected, instead of being penitent "was very wroth, and his countenance fell": and when a preacher brings any sin home to the door of his hearers he may be sure that some will go away from the presence of the Lord in the same frame of mind as Cain. In every congregation, however, there are, thank

God, those whose chief desire is to know the truth and to practise it at all costs, and who possess the nobleness of the Bereans in searching the Scriptures daily whether those things are so. These are the hope of the Church and of the nation. I know that there are some such here, whose opinions and lives have been changed by the truths which they have heard in this church. And why should any of the other class who hear me count me their enemy because I tell them the truth? I have been told, indeed, that to speak of the Sin of Schism is accounted bigotry by some. Why should it be thought such more than preaching on any other sin, as lying, slandering, cheating, swearing? I believe some people dislike all these subjects; but it is not always the food or medicine we like best which does us most good. And I would wish you to bear in mind that just as when I preach on intemperance, unmercifulness, or dishonesty, I do not judge anyone as guilty of the sin, but leave the conscience of those who are guilty to accuse them, so in regard to this Sin of Schism I lay down general principles, and leave you to apply them. To hide from you the nature of the Sin of Schism would be as great a dereliction of duty on my part as to conceal from you the nature of any other sin, and so allow the Day of Judgment to come to you wholly unprepared. All seekers after truth will acknowledge that to

point out the nature of any sin is not bigotry, but the greatest kindness and charity.

The change of tone in the secular press on this subject within the last few years is very remarkable. But a short time ago the unhappiness of our divisions was softened down, and their supposed advantages pointed out. Now the general voice is for union, and the unscriptural nature of our various divisions is plainly stated. And this is only voicing the change of opinion amongst the thinking public, for of late many have been searching the Scriptures on the subject, and the question of union has been discussed by nearly all denominations of professing Christians, and at least one Society has been formed, the members of which pledge themselves to pray specially that the primitive state of Christianity may be restored, and all Christians be one. The time is not yet when this can be accomplished, but no careful and pious reader of the Bible can fail to believe in its possibility, and pray that the days of our divisions may be shortened. It is a subject which should commend itself to our most earnest attention here in the North of Ireland, where nearly all of us are staunch Unionists. We believe in a United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland: we must also consistently believe in a United Kingdom of Christ. We have professed ourselves as ready to

fight rather than submit to the dismemberment of the Empire: we must, to be consistent, be prepared to resist the division of the Empire of Christ. We look on those who would separate these isles as traitors to their country: and no less are they traitors to the Church who would cause division in the aisles of the House of God.

I have said that this subject is not as inviting as some of those we have lately been considering, and yet it is closely connected with our subject of last Sunday evening—the Communion of Saints. On last Sunday evening our attention was directed to the fact that the Communion of Saints is represented in the New Testament under various figures; and if we recall those figures we can hardly fail to understand in what the Sin of Schism consists. One of these metaphors is that of a tree—"I am the Vine," says Christ, "ye are the branches" (S. John xv. 5): Schism is the breaking off a branch or twig from this Divine Tree. Another of these metaphors is that of a building: Schism is a breaking down the wall of this holy temple of God, or the taking away some of the stones thereof. Another figure used in the New Testament to show the nature of the Communion of Saints is that of a family: Schism is the creating of discord in the family of God, or separating from the household of faith. But the figure

which represents the closest union existing amongst the faithful in Christ Jesus is that of the human body. The Church is represented as Christ's Body: Schism is spoken of as a rending asunder of this sacred Body.

And here I would give a word of warning. If we take our opinions from our neighbours instead of searching the Scriptures for ourselves, there are certain sins which it will be impossible for us to see as God sees them. Wherever any sin is prevalent, there you find loose ideas in regard to that sin. Take an extreme case. Suppose we had been brought up among cannibals, we should see no sin in murdering persons and eating their flesh. They who are ready to sacrifice themselves under the car of Juggernaut would consider anyone preaching the sinfulness of the act as bringing strange doctrine to their ears. Amongst certain classes of those who are called Christians there may be found some who do not look on drunkenness or impurity as a disgrace; and if we have been surrounded from our youth by those who are guilty of Schism, it is almost impossible for us to see the heinousness of the sin, or to avoid looking on it with some degree of palliation. Not that we should judge others. That is not my meaning; but that we should judge ourselves. And if we plead not guilty to the charge of Schism, that is no proof that we are innocent. The value of such a sense of acquittal depends on

how we have been brought up, how we have studied the Bible, how we have used our conscience and the promptings of the Holy Ghost.

The meaning of the word Schism is a dividing. The Greek word from which our word Schism comes is used in the original of S. John ix. 16: "Therefore said some of the Pharisees, This Man is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath Day. Others said, How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles? And there was a division *(schism)* among them." It is used again in 1 Corinthians i. 10: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions *(schisms)* among you." It is found also in 1 Corinthians xi. 17, 18: "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church I hear that there be divisions *(schisms)* among you." It occurs also in 1 Corinthians xii. 25: "That there be no schism in the body." These are not the only passages in which the word Schism is used. The Bible speaks repeatedly of the Sin of Schism, and the wrath of God is threatened against those who commit it, whether under the Old Covenant or the New, whether they are Corinthians or followers of Korah.

I have already pointed out the nature of this Sin of Schism by drawing your attention to some of those metaphors in the New Testament which denote the unity of Christ's Church, and that union which exists between all the members of the same. Schism is a breaking off a branch of the True Vine; the taking a living stone out of the holy Temple of God; the breaking up of the Family of God; the rending in pieces the mystical Body of Christ. Before proceeding to further examine Holy Scripture on the subject, it will be instructive to notice the opinion of the Christian Church on Schism. And most important it is for us to note the teaching of that branch of "the Holy Catholic Church," of which we are members, for to know this is to know what our Reformers believed and taught. In the collect for the festival of S. Simon and S. Jude we pray, "O Almighty God, Who hast built Thy Church upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the head corner-stone: Grant us so to be joined together in unity of spirit by their doctrine, that we may be made an holy temple acceptable unto Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord." In the prayer for all sorts and conditions of men there is found this petition, "More especially we pray for the good estate of the Catholic Church; that it may be so guided and governed by Thy good Spirit, that all who

profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life." In the form of prayer for the twentieth day of June we pray, "Let not heresies and false doctrines disturb the peace of the Church, nor Schisms and causeless divisions weaken it." And in the prayer for unity in the same Service, which prayer has been placed in our Irish Prayer Book among the "Prayers and Thanksgivings to be used upon Several Occasions," we pray, "O God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; Give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly Union and Concord; that as there is but one Body, and one Spirit, and one Hope of our Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of Truth and Peace, of Faith and Charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify Thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord." And, not to weary you with quotations, in the Litany we pray to be delivered "from all false doctrine, heresy, and schism." Our Church, therefore, gives no uncertain sound on the Sin of Schism. She teaches us in many places to pray against it.

What was the teaching of the early Church on the question of Schism? S. Cyprian wrote a treatise on the Unity of the Church, and S. Augustine wrote several works against those who had separated from the Church, in one of which he says that "there is nothing more grievous than the sacrilege of Schism." "As children of light and truth," says the holy martyr Ignatius, "avoid the division of unity, and the evil doctrines of heretics." Irenæus writes: "The spiritual man will also judge those who work divisions; vain men devoid of the love of God, seeking their own advantage more than the unity of the Church, who for trivial, nay, for any reasons rend and divide the great and glorious Body of Christ, and, as far as in them lies, slay it; who speak peace, and work warfare; who truly strain off the gnat and swallow the camel, for no improvement can be made by them so great as is the evil of Schism." I might multiply quotations setting forth the teaching of the Church of Christ in primitive times on our subject. I think I have said enough to show that the early Christians looked on Schism as a deadly sin.

It may be more interesting to some, although less important, to have the opinion of some modern writers outside the Anglican Church. The names of John Calvin and Richard Baxter have great weight with

many people in the North of Ireland; and it will be not a little instructive to lovers of these men to hear their expressed opinion on the subject of Schism. Calvin writes: "A departure from the visible Church is a denial of God and Christ; wherefore we must beware of so wicked a dissent, for when we are attempting, so far as in us lies, the ruin of God's truth, we deserve to be crushed beneath the thunders of His extremest wrath. Nor can any more atrocious crime be imagined than the violation by sacrilegious perfidy of that marriage which the Only-begotten Son of God has deigned to contract with us." Richard Baxter, in his "Cure of Church Division," writes: "He that is out of the Church is without the teaching, the holy worship, the prayers, and the discipline of the Church; and is out of the way where the Spirit doth come, and out of the society which Christ is especially related to; for He is the Saviour of the body, and if we once leave His hospital, we cannot expect the presence and help of the Physician. Nor will He be a Pilot to them who forsake His ship, nor a Captain to those who separate from His army. Out of this ark there is nothing but a deluge, and no place of rest or safety for a soul."

If, then, we look on Schism as a slight thing, we place ourselves in opposition to the piety and learning of the Christian Church in every age. Indeed, we can

look lightly on Schism only by ignoring the character of the Church of God as described in the Bible. Holy Scripture speaks only of one undivided Church in any country: Schism says that in one country you may have as many separate communities, calling themselves Churches, as you please; the more numerous they are, the better, and the more they differ from one another, the better. The Bible speaks of the Church at Philippi, at Ephesus, at Smyrna—not of the Church of Paul, or Apollos, or Barnabas: Schism speaks of the Church of Calvin, the Church of Wesley, the Church of John Knox. The New Testament represents Christ alone as having power to found a Church: Schism claims this power as belonging to any mere man who chooses to exercise it. The New Testament represents the power and authority to ordain men to the Ministry as coming solely from Christ: Schism says that anyone who pleases may take to himself this power and authority. You know how lightly according to the pretensions of Schism some men take on themselves the office of the Ministry; how easily men are constituted Clergymen. A man need not know Hebrew, or Greek, or even English. He has only to borrow the clothes of an undertaker's man, and add thereto a stock or white tie, and a broad-brimmed Oxford hat, and there stands the article ready, a piece of home manufacture.

Having manufactured your Minister, it is not difficult to complete your organization according to human ideas. You have only to get a number of people to meet regularly together with you for worship, and call yourselves a Church; and if you succeed in gaining many adherents, and in keeping them together, you will have the title of Church applied to you by everyone who has not studied the Bible. This is the way a Church is founded now: from the first it was not so. In the earliest Christian times there was only one ecclesiastical organization in any country which took to itself the title of Church. In the New Testament you do not read of S. Paul going to any country and establishing a Church, and then S. Peter or S. James following him and founding one in opposition. Take our native land. There are at present in it many different denominations calling themselves Churches: at first there was only one. Who planted the Church in this country we are unable to say with certainty; but we know that there was a Christian Church here when S. Patrick came to preach the Gospel. How did S. Patrick act? Did he set up a new Church? Nay verily. The one ancient Church of Ireland continued all through the centuries. In the twelfth century the yoke of Rome was imposed on her by the sword of England. In the sixteenth century she threw off that yoke, and lived on, the same

historical Church. Some thirty years after that Reformation from within, the Church of Rome sent into this country missionaries who had Continental, not Irish, Orders, and so caused the first Schism in the original Church of Ireland. And since that first great Schism was perpetrated by the foreign Church of Rome, other aliens have come to our shores, some from Scotland, some from England, and have helped the Roman Pontiff in rending in pieces the seamless robe of Christ. However excellent these various and varied denominations may be, they are but human institutions at the best; they can never be anything but aliens in Ireland; not one of them has any claim to be the ancient Catholic Church of our native land.

Were these various denominations who came to our shores, from the Roman Church onwards, guilty of sin in dividing the one Church of this country, or was their schismatical action meritorious, as some would have us believe? Let us see what answer the Bible gives to this question.

I suppose it will not be disputed that in the Old Testament God founded only one Church; and there can be as little doubt that He founded only one in the New. That was the Old Covenant; this is the New: there is but one Covenant at one time. It is a fact which can be doubted by none that Christ founded only

one Church. The fact is also certain that He intended the one Church which He founded to remain always undivided. Listen to Christ's prayer for the members of His Church: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." (S. John xvii. 20, 21.) The unity of the Church, you will see from this prayer, was to be such an intimate oneness as subsists between God the Father and God the Son. It was also to be a visible unity, not a unity of sentiment or of purpose, but such a unity as would be seen by those outside the pale of Christianity, to convince them—"that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me." The various denominations into which Christians are divided retard the progress of the Gospel among the heathen. Henry Pahtahquehong Chase, the hereditary chief of the Ojibeway tribe of Indians, a convert to Christianity, and now in Holy Orders, told me that he was utterly staggered when he came to this country and found the Church of Christ split up into divisions. He was thankful, he said, that he had believed the Gospel of Christ before he knew anything of the divisions in religion; for he was afraid that if he had known that Christians were divided into hostile

camps like his own Indian tribes, perpetually at war with one another, it would have prevented him from becoming a Christian.

That Christ intended His Church to remain for ever undivided is evident also from the figurative terms used to designate the Church—a Vine, a Household, a Temple, a Body, a Kingdom. The last-named term, a Kingdom, is the usual name of the Church in the New Testament, and it sets forth emphatically the unity of that Society which Christ established on earth.

We can, then, see the heinousness of the Sin of Schism. It is a breach of God's law, a thwarting of the intention of Christ, a contradiction of the prayer which He prayed for His people.

In addition to Christ's prayer for unity, and in addition to the metaphors which, applied to the Christian Society, show forth its unity, there are also numerous passages directly teaching the same truth. I shall quote a few of these. Romans xv. 5, 6: "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Corinthians i. 10-13: "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among

you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" 2 Corinthians xiii. 11: "Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you." Ephesians iv. 3-6: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all."

Besides such verses as those I have quoted, which exhort to unity, there are others which speak of the awfulness of Schism. The Christian Church is commonly called in the New Testament "the Kingdom of God"; and Christ says (S. Matthew xii. 25), "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand." When enforcing the relative duties of Christians, the term "the body of Christ," is that by which S. Paul usually speaks of the Church; and to the Corinthians

the Apostle writes (1 Epistle xii. 25), "That there should be no schism in the Body." No language could be employed which would convey a more awful idea of the guilt of Schism than that here used by the Apostle when he speaks of it as a rending asunder of the mystical Body of Christ. Consider also such solemn words of Holy Scripture as I am now about to read to you. 1 Corinthians iii. 3, 4: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men? For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?" 1 Corinthians xi. 17, 18: "Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse. For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it." 2 Timothy iv. 3, 4: "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables." S. Jude, in the nineteenth verse of his Epistle, writes: "These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit"; and in the eleventh verse he speaks of Christians who "perished in the gainsaying of Core." The sin of Korah and his

company is, according to S. Jude, possible in Christian times; and that sin was rebelling against the constituted authorities of the Church, claiming the office of the priesthood, and creating a Schism in the Church. So far have we departed from the plain teaching of God's Word that some people actually speak of these things as virtuous and praiseworthy actions.

There is no sin which has not its apologists; no sin but there will be found some persons to explain it away, or affirm that it is not a sin at all; and Schism is not an exception. I shall therefore place before you the principal methods of explaining away the Sin of Schism.

I. Some say that Schism in the present day is not the Schism condemned in the Bible, for that was forming a division within the Church, and this is leaving the Church and joining some denomination calling itself Christian, or setting up a new denomination. And it is intended in this way to palliate the modern phase of Schism! This is the same as saying that discord and division within a family is a sin; but if the discord and division becomes so acute that the members of the same family cannot live under the same roof-tree, it ceases to be a sin!

II. Some try to explain away Schism by saying that the various denominations are not really divided, for

they all agree in essentials, "at least all Protestants," they add, "agree in essential doctrines."

Is the latter part of this statement true to fact? Let us test it. I suppose it will be confessed that it is essential to have right notions of the nature of God; yet some say that there are three Persons in the Godhead, while some say there is but one. Some believe that Jesus Christ is true God and Man; others affirm Him to be Man only. Some say that the Holy Ghost is God; others will not grant that He is even a Person.

Again, one would suppose that to have right ideas about the Atonement is essential: yet some say that Christ died for the whole world; some that He died only "for the elect"; and some that He died for nobody. One would suppose also that a right faith in regard to the Services which Christ instituted is an essential in religion; yet some practically believe that there are two Sacraments; some that there is one; and some that there are none. And it is affirmed that these people are not really divided!

Even if it were proved that the various denominations are agreed in essentials, and that they are perfectly orthodox in their creed, this would not deliver them from the charge of Schism. It is necessary to abide in the Apostolic fellowship as well as in the Apostolic faith.

III. Others apologize for Schism by saying that "we

are all united in heart and soul; we have the same aims and objects, the same hopes and fears; and we all seek for Heaven at the last; therefore we are not guilty of the sin of division, although broken up into various sections." I should in all justice confess that I have never known this ostrich-argument put forward by anyone who had studied the Bible on the question of Schism. Even a politician might see the fallacy underneath such an apology; for it is the same as saying that the various nations in Europe are all united in promoting greatness, wealth, and stability, in acquiring new territory, in putting down rebellion, and cultivating social order; therefore they are not divided. Are Christians united who cannot walk together to the House of God as friends, who will not join in the same prayers and thanksgivings, who refuse to unite in the same service of Holy Communion, who will not have their children baptized at the same font, who cannot kneel side by side in the same church?

IV. The final position of the apologist for Schism is, "No one will be asked at the gate of Heaven to what Church or denomination he belonged here." I find on talking further with the persons who say this that they think that Roman Catholics and Unitarians will be questioned very decisively on the point!

The question is sometimes seriously discussed, "Under

what circumstances is Schism justifiable?" Schism is a sin. What would you think of me, then, if I began to discuss under what circumstances some other sin, as lying, murder, stealing, ought to be committed?

It is to be borne in mind at the same time that all the sin of division does not rest on the heads of Schismatics. A Church which tyrannically imposes unlawful terms of communion is also guilty of the Sin of Schism. There are also degrees of guilt. The position of those who for some slight excuse separated from the historic Church is very different from that of their descendants who have been brought up in Dissent, and who accept things as they have been used to them from their childhood. Everyone, however, is bound to enquire and search the Scriptures, and see what his position is, instead of blindly accepting things as they are.

Under what conditions is the Sin of Schism justifiable? This is the question before us. It is strange that men should be found to maintain that a certain sin under certain circumstances is justifiable—nay, more, to affirm that under certain conditions it becomes a righteous act; yet it is a fact that such men are to be found. Let me give you some of the cases in which these men say that a man may commit the Sin of Schism and be blameless.

1. Errors of doctrine or of ritual, they say, justify

one in leaving the Church and setting up a new denomination. If this were acted upon strictly and logically there could be neither Church nor sect in the world, for I suppose no two persons could be found to agree in every minute detail of ritual and doctrine. The answer to this excuse for the Sin of Schism is that in the time of our Blessed Lord there were many errors in the Jewish Church in both doctrine and ritual, yet our Lord did not dissent from the Jewish Church, but regularly attended the Services in the Temple and in the Synagogue.

But it has been asked, "Did not Irish Churchmen dissent from the Church of Rome in the sixteenth century on account of errors in ritual and doctrine in the Roman Church?" They did nothing of the kind. Irish Churchmen in the sixteenth century did not leave the historic Church of this country, although it had become Romanized. They remained in the Church, and reformed it, and cast off the foreign authority of Rome. Then some years later the Church of Rome established a branch of the Roman Church in this country. To follow Christ's example is best. If a man is conscious of errors in the Church he may, by remaining where he is, effect some reformation; by leaving the Church he loses all chance of bringing about a better state of things, and does himself an irreparable injury.

2. Faults in the lives of any of the Ministers of the Church, or in those of any laymen, are regarded as a sufficient cause for committing the Sin of Schism. But when one of our Lord's own Ministers turned out to be "a devil" Christ did not for that reason set up another Church. And when errors sprang up in the lives of Christians in the early Church, in Corinth, in Laodicea, and elsewhere, the Apostles did not dissent from the Church in these places, and form a new one. In His messages to the Seven Churches our Blessed Lord never counsels in any case that a new Church should be set up, but that the one already in existence should be purified. While it should be the earnest desire and effort of everyone to make all the members of the Church pure, to prevent disappointment, he should remember that Christ teaches in such parables as those of the Draw Net, and of the Tares, that in spite of the greatest care the bad and the good will be found together "until the harvest."

3. The excuses for Schism which we have been considering are matters of serious import; but there are other excuses put forward which are really frivolous. Look, for example, at the trivial causes for which the first Dissenters in England separated from the Church of the country—because the Clergy officiated in a white garment and not in a black one; because a ring was

used in the Marriage Service; because people adopted the position of kneeling when receiving the Holy Communion, and not that of sitting. Such were the reasons for which some men thought themselves justified in rending in pieces "the Body of Christ." And the reasons which induce men in our own day to leave the historic Church of this country are no less frivolous. In some instances the motive is a social one—because a man has a good friend who belongs to a certain denomination, or because he finds himself a person of greater importance in some small sect than he could be in the ranks of a large Christian community. In other cases the act of Schism is done from a misapprehension of the nature of public worship—because there is a brilliant preacher in some neighbouring chapel. And others forsake the Church of their nativity for reasons yet less worthy than these—because their subscriptions have not, in their estimation, been sufficiently blazoned abroad; because they have had a difference of opinion with the Rector of the Parish; because, loving the chief places in the Synagogue, they have quarrelled with the Churchwardens for not assigning them a pew sufficiently prominent for their own ideas of their position.

I would wish to make it quite clear that I am speaking just now of those who fall into Schism from un-

worthy causes. Churchmen may regret the departure of those "who separate themselves" on conscientious grounds: they never can look on them with contempt.

And I should not be candid if I did not confess that some who join us from dissenting communities do so from unholy motives: the wish, for example, for respectability, or for saving their purses. Such persons come to us retaining still the peculiar doctrines of their own sect, and then, when they are firmly settled in their new ecclesiastical home, attack the Church because she does not profess their heretical opinions. They object to the Ordinal because it states the fact that since the time of the Apostles there have been three Orders in the Christian Ministry; or they object to the Baptismal Service because it declares that Christ in His own Ordinance embraces a child with the arms of His mercy; or they object to the Creed, which makes faith in the undivided Trinity a cardinal doctrine of the Gospel. If they were conscientious men they would have thought prayerfully over these things before they joined us, and searched the Scriptures whether these things were so.

All earnest Christians are now most desirous that Christ's prayer for unity may speedily be fulfilled. We no longer hear the different denominations of Christians compared to different regiments of soldiers marching

against a common foe, for it is sadly confessed that too often these ecclesiastical regiments have turned their arms against one another. It is quite possible, however, to be too precipitate in our efforts for corporate unity. I do not think that true and lasting union can be promoted by anyone watering down his conscientious convictions, but rather by everyone examining the ground of his belief by the light of Holy Scripture and of Church History.

Another step towards unity would be for the members of the various denominations to study their own formularies, and believe them honestly. Most Churchmen would assent to the general orthodoxy of John Wesley's "Notes on the New Testament," and of his "Fifty-two Sermons," and if all Churchmen honestly received the Book of Common Prayer, and all Presbyterians the Westminster Confession of Faith, there would be fewer points of difference between them than at present. It is, we fear, true, however, that some Churchmen receive certain Romish traditions, and others certain Protestant traditions which are altogether contrary to the Book of Common Prayer; and it was evident from the internecine war between the late Mr. Spurgeon and his Dissenting brethren, known as "The Down-grade Controversy," that many English Nonconformists have entirely forsaken the faith of their Formularies.

"They believed—well, I'm puzzled—I think I may call
Their belief a believing in nothing at all,
Or something of that sort; I know they all went
For a general union of total dissent."

It would also, I have no doubt, hasten the time when all shall be one if every person cultivated the acquaintance of those who differ from him in doctrine. He would find, perhaps to his surprise, that some Roman Catholics trust for salvation to the merits of Christ; that some Unitarians revere the Name of Jesus; and he might even discover a Plymouth Brother who does not trust in himself that he is righteous and despise others. No doubt there are at present vital differences between Churchmen and Dissenters; but prejudice, and bigotry, and mutual misunderstandings prevent men from considering in a judicial spirit the points on which they differ. For all of us to cultivate the amenities of life, to show genuine sympathy in sorrow, to give ready help where we can be of any use, and to exhibit a courteous and kindly spirit at all times would bring us into contact with sincere souls where we might have thought it impossible for them to exist, and would smooth the way towards the ending of our unhappy divisions.

And they who differ from one another have lately shown signs of coming to an agreement. The levelling

up in recent years on the part of certain Nonconformists is very remarkable. When the late William Makepeace Thackeray visited Belfast he said that the churches had a decidedly Presbyterian look. If he could come here now he would give the Presbyterians credit for possessing some of the most correct ecclesiastical edifices in town. Ten years ago bells in the opinion of Dissenters here were "pagan"; now the sound of bells may be heard from some of their own towers. Fifteen years ago Belfast Churchmen regarded parish-guilds as "Popish"; now Presbyterians have guilds in connection with many of their congregations. Most of us can remember when Irish Presbyterians would sing nothing but psalms in their Services; now in several places hymns are sung and organs played. In the Established Church of Scotland, also, a written liturgy is sometimes used, the *Te Deum* sung, and the Apostles' Creed chanted; and there is no Jenny Geddes to hurl a stool at the Minister's head. A few years ago to speak of a church being consecrated to God was "superstitious"; now Dissenters in general have ceased having secular lectures and tea meetings in their houses of worship, and regard with considerable reverence the place of prayer. If Churchmen adopt a certain style of clerical dress, it is first dubbed as "the mark of the beast," and then imitated; if they have Thanksgivings

for the Blessings of Harvest, these are first regarded as "ritualism," and then copied.

And is there no approach on the part of the Church to the methods of Dissent? What then about Select Vestries, and Synods, and Cottage Services, and Parochial Missions?

I am aware that these are all but slight things in themselves, yet are they signs of the times.

Appendix

to

Lecture on Fasting.

Appendix to Lecture on Fasting.

THE following quotation is very instructive, and will have great weight with all Low Churchmen. It is from "Sermons by the Rev. John Venn, M.A.," published in two volumes, in the year 1827. This Mr. Venn was a son of the Rev. Henry Venn; for twenty years he was Rector of Clapham, and was, according to the memoir prefixed to the volumes, "the projector and principal founder of the Church Missionary Society." The quotation is a complete proof that Evangelicals of the past generation taught and practised Christian fasting:—

"But again it may be urged, 'If we feel repentance in our hearts God, Who sees our hearts, does not require to be informed of it by any external expression.' No, but the same may be affirmed of prayer; why should we pray? God knows our wants, and does not need that we should formally state them to Him. The same also may be said of all the means of grace which God has appointed. If our hearts are right with God, what occasion is there for using them; and if they are not, what benefit can arise from their use? All such reasoning proves too much. It is founded upon a false view of human nature, and of the means by which God changes and rectifies the heart. God, it is true, could infuse grace into the heart, could make us angels in a moment, but it is not His will so to do. He appoints

certain means to that end ; the efficacy of which, if they are diligently and devoutly used, is certain, though often gradual and slow. Admitting, then, that a man does not feel the repentance and humiliation which he ought to feel, yet ought he not to feel them ? And ought he not to seek them in the channels which God hath appointed for communicating them ? If he calls to mind his sins, if he considers the majesty, and holiness, and goodness of God, against Whom he has sinned, if he makes use of outward humiliation, as an indication that he ought to feel, and desires to feel, inward humiliation, he at least does that which has a tendency to produce it. I am sure that a contrary conduct has no such tendency. The words of our Blessed Lord are strictly in point : ' To him that hath shall be given.'

" Let a man endeavour to do what he can, and what he ought ; and however imperfectly it may be done the blessing of God will rest upon his endeavours. If, however, the question be repeated, When a man feels real repentance in his heart, what occasion can there be for the external expression of it ? I answer that, in proportion as men feel it, they will be disposed to show it. No truly pious man can be unwilling to attend any ordinances or means of grace which are calculated to call his religious feelings into exercise. Indeed, where the feelings themselves exist, the exercise of them is not only natural, but necessary. The very idea of true humiliation of heart implies everything humble and lowly in the outward demeanour.

" But there may be some disposed to argue :

" ' Admitting all that has been said, why should fasting in particular be selected as an external mark of humiliation ? '

I answer, that, had it been the will of God, doubtless something else might have been chosen. But yet none other occurs to me as a less objectionable expression of sorrow and humility. Fasting, it should be remembered, has always been the public token of humility, and this in heathen nations as well as amongst Jews and Christians. Now this alone furnishes a strong plea for its adoption and continuance. It is sanctioned by the highest antiquity, and by the most general usage; enjoined of God upon the Jews; practised by our Saviour and His disciples; and recommended by them to the Christian world. Nor is this all. Fasting, it may be confidently said, has all the qualities which might reasonably be expected in an external act of humiliation. In the first place, it is a duty easily practised; requiring no apparatus; connected with no expense; simple in its own nature; equally adapted to all ranks, climates, and places. Moreover, it involves, as every mark of humiliation should, an act of self-denial, and this act not so severe as to unfit it for general use, nor so slight as inadequately to express its meaning. It has, moreover, the peculiar recommendation that it is an act connected with the mortification of those very appetites whence many of the sins for which we thus humble ourselves proceed. Fulness of diet and unrestrained indulgence of appetite are frequent sources of intemperance, lust, pride, and extravagance. That act, therefore, has surely a singular propriety, which has a tendency to correct the evil for which it expresses our contrition."

The following is from "Plain Words on Christian Living," by the Very Rev. Dean Vaughan, D.D. He will not be looked on by any as an extreme witness:—

"But in the practice of that special moderation of which I have spoken there is no such risk. A fasting which consists in a double temperance, both of quality and quantity, can do no man harm in body, and (if it be done religiously) must do every man good in soul. I speak not of that spurious abstinence which foregoes animal food and seeks other nutriment at once more palatable and less wholesome; careless how much trouble is thus occasioned to others, or how much notice is thus drawn upon the act."

The opinion of Bishop Beveridge commands the respect of every Biblical scholar. I give an extract from his sermon on "The Usefulness of Fasting":—

"Thus I have briefly touched upon some of those many arguments which might be produced to demonstrate the excellency and usefulness of fasting. I am very sensible that this will seem strange doctrine to many in our age, like those S. Chrysostom speaks of, who under a pretence of greater light and perfection, look upon themselves as far above so low a dispensation as this is, and therefore indulge their appetites, and laugh at such pitiful, mean Christians as are forced to give themselves to fasting; and I fear many of you that hear me at this time are of the same mind, and therefore think that fasting perhaps may be very good and needful for others, but not at all for themselves.

"But what? Are you not commanded to fast as well as pray? And how come you to be disobliged from one duty more than from the other? Did not Christ Himself say, 'That when He, the Bridegroom, was taken from them then His disciples should fast'? And are not you in the number of His disciples? Hath not He, your Master, taught you

how to fast, as well as how to pray, and to give your alms? And do you think that He would teach you anything but what you are bound to do? Nay, are you not therefore bound to do it, because He hath taught you it? Did not He Himself do it? Have not all the Saints, both in the Old and New Testament, and in all ages ever since, given themselves to fasting? Did not S. Paul himself do so? And do you think yourselves more pure, more holy, more perfect than S. Paul was?"

The late Thomas Arnold, of Rugby, was certainly not a High Churchman. This is what he says in his sermon on "Christian Fasting":—

"There is a kind of fasting which can be nothing but good for us to practise. We all know that in our daily eating and drinking we eat and drink many things which we do not need, but which merely give us pleasure. I do not mean that we sin against temperance in so eating and drinking; I do not think that we do; in this, as in other things, it is God's gracious will to give us not only enough for necessity, but for pleasure also. But, surely, if there be such a thing as self-denial in the world, here is the fit place for its exercise; it is here that, as a discipline, it is most complete."

INDEX.

Almsgiving, 165—199.
A. K. H. B., his pleasantry, 154.
Ambrose, S., on Confirmation, 113.
Anglican Church, liberty of thought in, 24.
Arnold, Rev. Thomas, on Fasting, 319.
Assurance, doctrine of, 239, etc.
Augustine, S., on Confirmation, 112, 116; on Schism, 291.

Baptism, Sacrament of, 83—105.
Baxter, Rev. Richard, on Schism, 292.
Beveridge, Bishop, on Fasting, 318.
Beza, on Episcopacy, 34.
Bull, Bishop, on Witness of Spirit, 260.

Calvin, John, on Episcopacy, 33; on written prayers, 69; on Confirmation, 109, 113; on Schism, 292.
Children of God, in what senses used in Bible, 252.
Church, The Holy Catholic, 1—19.
Churchmen, persecuted by Dissenters, 55.
Cigars and Offertories, 196.
Clough, Arthur Hugh, quoted, 52.
Communion, Holy, 121—133.
Communion of Saints, 265—280.
Confirmation, 109—118.
Confidence, false, 252.
Consubstantiation, 127.
Continuity, essential to every Society, 12; through chief officers, 13; of Irish Church, 15, 294.
Conversion, 203—236.
Cowper, William, quoted, 247.
Cyprian, S., on Confirmation, 112; on Schism, 291.

Disloyal Churchmen, 15, 124, 307.
Dissent, points of superiority, 25.
Dissenters, persecute Churchmen, 55.

Eliot, George, quoted, 63.
Ephesus, Council of, 34.
Episcopacy, 23—52.
Extempore Prayer, no instance of in Bible, 57; introduced into England, 58.
Eusebius, his History, 38.

Fairbairn, Rev. Patrick, quoted, 144.
Fasting, 139—161.
Feeling, Theory of, 246—250; not reliable, 249; evil results of, 246; unscriptural, 256; place of, 257.
Freemasonry, continuity in, 13.
Frederick the Great, 121.
Friendships, 50, 275.

Goethe, quoted on Title page.
Grotius, on Episcopacy, 33.

Hegesippus, quoted, 37.
Herbert, George, on Fasting, 158.
Hobbes, quoted, 204.
Holmes, Oliver Wendell, his dull preacher and lively listener, 68.
Hook, Dean, on doctrine of Sacrifice, 129.
How, Bishop Walsham, quoted, 278.
Huxley, Professor, quoted, 203.

Ignatius, on Episcopacy, 36.
Indefectible grace, doctrine of, 94, 217.
Ireland, Church of, continuity in, 15, 294; our claim to title, 23; democratic, 25; not schismatical, 304.
Irenæus, on Episcopacy, 35; on Schism, 291.

Jerome, S., on Episcopacy, 42; on Confirmation, 112.
Jerusalem, the "holy city," 4; Church of, 48; S. James, first Bishop of, 50.

Jews, existence of, in favour of Bible, 121; three Orders in Ministry of, 44; tithes paid by, 189.
Judging others, 236, 251.
Justification by faith, 173, 211.
Juvenal, quoted, 179.

Knowledge not feeling the language of Bible, 256.

Lightfoot, Bishop, on Episcopacy, 42.
Liturgy, a, 55—80.
Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, quoted, 267, 276.
Lowell, James Russell, quoted, 57, 279, 309.

Manufacture of Ministers, 293.
Melancthon, on Episcopacy, 33.
Milton, John, quoted, 143.
Moore, Thomas, quoted, 250.
Morose giving, 198.

Nature, teaching of, 225.
Nestorians, 34.
New-Birth confounded with Conversion, 228.
Nicæa, Council of, 35

Orange Society, continuity in, 13.
Ordination, who have power of, 26; by Bishops, 28; valid defined, 28.
Origen, on Episcopacy, 35.

Persecution of Churchmen by Dissenters, 55; of Quakers by Puritans, 57.
Prayer Book, work of Reformers, 58; opinion of martyrs, 59.
Prelacy, 24.
Presbyterian "Directory" on Fasting, 152.
Presbyterians, on Schism, 292.
Presence, Real Spiritual, in Holy Communion, 128.
Press, secular, change on Schism, 285.
Priesthood of laity, 132.
Proportionate giving, 190, 196.

Quakers, persecuted by Puritans, 57.

Reformers, on Episcopacy, 32; composed Prayer Book, 58.
Regeneration, a grace of Baptism, 92; mistakes in regard to, 93—95; meaning of word in Bible, 97; in Jewish writings, 97; in Christian writings, 98.
Reward of giving to God, 171—182.
Roman Church, none of its clergy have Irish Orders, 17; schismatical in Ireland, 295.

Sabbath, change from Jewish to Christian, 29.
Saints, meaning of word, 265.
Sacrament, application of word, 124.
Sacrifice, nature of, 129, etc.
Sacrificial aspect of Eucharist, 128, etc.
Sacrificing laity, a, in a certain sense, 132.
Sacrificing priesthood, 131.
Saved, unscriptural use of word, 243; scriptural meanings of, 245.
Schism, sin of, 283—311.
Secker, Archbishop, quoted, 62.
Security, sense of, not to be relied on, 251.
Selden, "On Tithes," 190.
Self-denial in giving, 196.
Semler, quoted, 247.
Society, a, necessary for propagation of doctrines, 6; power of admission and expulsion, 9; power to make laws, 10; stated communications, 11; obedience to officers, 12; unity, 12; continuity, 12.
Sowing and reaping, 171.
Spiritual experiences different, 221.
Sudden conversions in New Testament the result of miracles, 224.

Taylor, Bishop Jeremy, quoted, 60.
Tennyson, quoted, 51, 227.
Tertullian, on Episcopacy, 35; on Confirmation, 112.
Thackeray, quoted, 275, 310.
Tithes, 189.
Transubstantiation, 127.
Trent, Council of, 126.

Unionists, 285.
Unity of Church, 295, 298.
Union, how to promote, 308, 309 ; signs of, 310.

Vaughan, Very Rev. Dean, on Fasting, 318.
Venn, Rev. John, on Fasting, 152, 315.

Wesley, Rev. Charles, quoted, 267.
"Westminster Confession of Faith," on Baptism, 86; on rites and ceremonies, 110.
Witness of the Spirit, 239—262.

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